

MONUMENT TO SHELLEY, CHRISTCHURCH, HANTS

THE SHELLEY LEGEND

BY

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in collaboration with MARTHA MARY SCHLEGEL

THEODORE GEORGE EHRSAM *and* LOUIS ADDISON WATERS

"Let us see the truth, whatever that may be"

SHELLEY, 1822

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PREFACE

The Shelley Legend is a term used to characterize fallacious views about the life of Shelley and his writings which have grown up principally under the careful supervision first of Mary Shelley and after her death, in 1851, of Lady Shelley, wife of the poet's son, Sir Percy Florence Shelley It includes also various other chicaneries subsequently foisted by others upon admirers of the poet and his writings.

Part I reveals in retrospect the origin and the fostering of the legend during Mary's life and the reasons for its growth Part II offers an illustrated study of the handwriting of Shelley and members of his circle Part III explains how the serious charges against Harriet Westbrook, Shelley's first wife, had their authentication in certain letters demonstrably forged by the notorious scamp, Major George Gordon Byron, and how these letters came first into the possession of the Shelley family and then were dispersed without proper notation to other owners Part IV is the story of the rapid growth of the Shelley Legend after Lady Shelley took charge of it in 1851, and of the means she employed thereafter with her coadjutor, Dr Richard Garnett, against Shelley's friends, Hogg, Peacock, Trelawny, and others, to establish the Legend and to tyrannize over the interpretation, particularly of Shelley's desertion of Harriet and his relations with Mary. Lady Shelley's glorification of Mary in biography at the expense of Claire Clairmont is another phase of the Shelley Legend. So successful was Lady Shelley's campaign that the Shelley Legend, almost by dictation, pervades the official life of Shelley by Dowden as well as the *Mary Shelley* of Mrs. Julian Marshall—standard works from which most subsequent accounts have been drawn.

We have here another example of the conflict that always exists between a literary man's relatives and friends and his biographers and critics. The relatives do not understand that he belongs not to them but to the ages, they feel he is not great enough to stand the whole truth The biographers and critics, who have the verdict of history on their side, maintain that he is Lady Shelley very nearly succeeded in her ambition to perpetuate a legend of Shelley which "like the passage of an angel's tear falls through the clear ether silently"

In spite of occasional recalcitrants and dissenters like Matthew Arnold and Mark Twain, who were unable to accept the Shelley legend fostered by Dowden, Forman, Wise, and the Shelley Society, we may say that the

Shelley Legend still persists in Shelley biography and greatly colors our views of the poet and his extraordinary relationships with men and women In the biographies of Walter E Peck and Newman Ivey White, however, the legend about Harriet has been for the most part rejected, and Shelley biography in recent years is finding surer ground. The legend about Mary and the legend about Claire are still in need of correction

This study has been written to expose what we believe to be the fraudulent and mistaken efforts to turn the romantic, pagan Shelley, as Hogg, Peacock, and Trelawny knew him in the flesh, into a Victorian angel suitable for enshrinement among the gods of respectability and convention The book is not directed against Shelley, the "pardlike Spirit beautiful and swift" or his poetry, but against what has been done to him in the name of mistaken family devotion, sentimentality, and piety We take a step forward, we believe, in dispelling also the Lady Shelley-Dowden legend about Shelley's relations with Claire Clairmont and the Hoppner affair, which, though partly dispelled by J Harrington Smith, still pervades the great biography of Professor White

This book is provocative, as any book on Shelley must be For just as Rossetti observed, that Shelley hardly wrote a poem or drew a breath which did not cause disturbance to someone, so no one can write anything about Shelley without giving alarm and offense to somebody Be it understood again that *The Shelley Legend* is not so much a book about Shelley and his poetry as an exposition of some of the biographical and other devices and follies that have been committed in his name by devotees and enemies alike, though it may be frankly confessed that the devotees, in our opinion, have done more harm. Only when these mirages and mists have disappeared can any idea of the real Shelley, who was also the ideal Shelley, be apprehended

Part V reveals how forgery and fraudulence have continued to pervade Shelley biography and Shelleyana from the time of Major Byron to that of the H. Buxton Forman and Thomas J Wise of our day

For problems of handwriting and forgery, because of the following statement in Seymour de Ricci's *Bibliography of Shelley Letters,* we sought for Parts II, III, and V the aid of an expert, Mr. Louis A Waters of Syracuse, who makes his living in the service of the State of New York by detecting fraudulent documents

> Previous writers on Shelley have dismissed forged Shelley letters as despicable imposition on the public So many are now in existence, some of them three quarters of a century old, others quite modern and perpetrated with fiendish skill, that it has seemed necessary to collect a fair amount of evidence as to the history and bibliography of these dangerous frauds I wish to warn all autograph collectors against buying, without the utmost precautions, any Shelley letters not vouched for in the accom-

> panying lists I have seen of late a number of alleged Shelley autographs which have deceived for a time even competent experts Let my words be a warning to the over-confident buyer (page 7)

Miss Martha M Schlegel, drawing upon her large store of knowledge about Shelley and his circle, has contributed essential portions of Parts I and IV, and Mr Theodore G Ehrsam has brought his expert bibliographical knowledge and technique to bear upon Major Byron in Part III with most significant results. He has also collaborated in Parts IV and V and drawn up for the *Appendix* the Forman-Wise check list.

There are certain books to which we would pay tribute chief among these is the late Seymour de Ricci's *Bibliography of Shelley Letters* which, though inevitably containing some errors, is a very great monument of scholarly devotion in a singularly difficult field Garnett's *Letters About Shelley, The Rossetti Papers,* the Crabb Robinson Diaries have been particularly revealing and also the Frederickson and Forman sales catalogues and *A Shelley Library* of Thomas J Wise Special tribute must be paid to Miss R. Glynn Grylls' *Mary Shelley* and *Claire Clairmont* for the new materials therein and to the great biography of Newman Ivey White to which all Shelley scholars, despite their differences with him, are indebted.

We are under special obligation to collections of Shelley in American libraries, and to their curators the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the New York Public Library, the Library of Congress, and the libraries of Amherst, Duke, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Pennsylvania, and Yale Universities, especially to Belle da Costa Greene of The Pierpont Morgan Library, who graciously sent us photostats of the remarkable volume containing the correspondence of Major Byron and his forgeries, to Miss Adelaide Smith of the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, to Miss Norma Cuthbert of the Manuscript Division of the Huntington Library, and to Miss Fanny Ratchford of the University of Texas; also to the Shelley biographers and scholars, Frances Winwar, Elizabeth Nitchie, and Newman Ivey White, who kindly answered puzzling questions Professor Waldo H Dunn generously transcribed for us the manuscript notes Lady Shelley inserted in Froude's copy of *Shelley and Mary*

To Messrs. John Carter and David A Randall of the Rare Book Department of Scribners we are indebted for valuable criticisms of the text, and to other dealers in the Old and the Rare: Miss Mabel Zahn of Charles Sessler, Ernest Dressel North, Barnett J Beyer, John Fleming and Percy E Lawler of The Rosenbach Company, E. Byrne Hackett of The Brick Row Book Shop, William H. Royce of Gabriel Wells, and many others who have made available for study from time to time many Shelley letters and other manuscript materials From the proceedings of the Bibliographical Society

of America we reprint in Part III portions of the discussion of the forged letter of Dec 15-16, 1816 The Rosenbach Company has also kindly allowed us to reproduce in facsimile or quote important letters, and William Sloane, of Henry Holt and Company, has generously placed at our service the equally important correspondence of Shelley, Mary, and Hogg.

Most of all we are indebted to the librarian of Lehigh, Mr Howard Seavoy Leach who, in building with us the Lehigh Shelley collection, revealed that rare gift of intuitive sympathy, as he watched the work progress, by supplying out of the way items and needed books, even before we asked for them To Dean Philip M Palmer we are indebted for making possible the last two months of our joint endeavor, to Lehigh University for the purchase of many photostats, microfilms, and other research materials; and to our colleagues, J Burke Severs, Carl F. Strauch, James L Clifford, and George B Curtis for helpful suggestions concerning the text.

On the advice of my colleagues of the English staff at Lehigh, I add a brief explanation of Mr Waters' rôle in this study Busily engaged as special consultant for several police departments in New York State, testifying in numerous cases of forgery in the courts, he is not a Shelley specialist and has nothing about Shelley to prove other than that some manuscripts are in Shelley's hand and others are not. His task was a long one, and involved making enlargements, analyses, and deductions from more than seventy-odd negatives from the Shelley documents I left with him in early June of 1943. He was left to his own devices until he appeared at Lehigh in late December with profuse illustrations and his detailed report revealing that the spurious materials were far more numerous than the genuine. Since then he has examined at least fifty other items This prevalence of forgeries is to be expected when it becomes profitable to forge a distinguished name, like Shelley's, which from 1845 until the present day, has been a star performer in the autograph trade. Mr. Waters' division of the manuscripts into genuine and fallacious is based upon unquestioned standards in the Harvard Shelley Note Books I and II and in letters of known provenance or in the possession of institutions before forgery in Shelley papers began in 1845. With these beginnings the study has grown, with no attempt to force his results into our opinions, since he knew but dimly what aims we had in mind Not until he read the complete manuscript after his report was finished did he have a full conception of the bearing of his special investigations Even now he has no theory of Shelley to sponsor, but only a mass of manuscript that was far more costly for him to investigate than is his more profitable profession of expert in forged documents. The conclusions on handwriting in this study are solely his; in this field the rest of us assume no competence or responsibility, nor does he, for any of our views or arguments about Shelley.

A word further concerning expert testimony of questioned documents may be helpful The results of scientific examination by handwriting experts, as distinguished from graphologists, have been accepted by the United States Supreme Court, and by all State Courts, as explained in such books as *The Problem of Proof* and *Questioned Documents* by Albert S Osborn of New York and C A Mitchell's *The Scientific Examination of Documents,* and are recognized by the English Courts The F. B I maintains a staff of handwriting experts who have been responsible for the conviction of numerous writers of extortion letters and ransome notes None of these experts will give "snap" judgments on a questioned signature or document, none will describe from the handwriting the *character* of the writer, but all of them can and will tell whether or not a certain piece of writing is in the hand of a particular person, provided that they have sufficient samples of the writing, authentic standards for comparison, and time enough to study them The accuracy of such opinion is borne out not alone by "conviction" in court, but by a large number of confessions from designated suspects

These facts of daily occurrence set at naught the erroneous belief, very widely spread by newspaper reports of trials, that experts can be hired to testify by both sides of a case, and therefore such testimony is vitiated and worthless from the beginning The history of such expert testimony, on the contrary, its well-established function in the courts, and its ever increasing employment are sufficient to dispel this popular delusion One Shelley authority, however, recently exclaimed that before he would listen respectfully to expert testimony on handwriting, he would have to be presented with *six* experts, all in agreement It is a little hard to understand why Shelley should require *six* when the courts daily pass judgment based on the testimony of *one!*

ROBERT METCALF SMITH

Bethlehem, Pa
October 1, 1945

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THE SHELLEY LEGEND

PART I.

MARY SHELLEY AND SHELLEY BIOGRAPHY

"It ought to be obvious to the student of Shelley's life that Mary Shelley, for all her merits, was quite incapable, both morally and intellectually, of understanding her husband's opinions, to say nothing of sharing them." ELLSWORTH BARNARD, *Shelley's Religion (p. 89).*

"After Shelley's death we all degenerated apace."

EDWARD TRELAWNY.

1. MARY SHELLEY IN ITALY AFTER SHELLEY'S DEATH

The stormy waters off the coast of Lerici which closed over the bodies of Edward Williams and Percy Bysshe Shelley on July 8, 1822, left all of their friends dazed and desolate Shelley had been the central sun of their universe holding them as planets in their courses by his charm, affection, and generosity, by his enthusiasm and romantic idealism Byron, who had tired of Hunt and Shelley's scheme to establish a radical journal, veered off to Greece on the Bolivar and abandoned the enterprise, leaving Hunt and his large family stranded Trelawny, after succoring as best he could Shelley's prostrate wife, Mary, sailed away with Byron to assuage his own grief at the loss of the man he adored. The Countess Guiccioli after Byron's departure went away to her own consolations, for she had never liked Mary or Claire Clairmont Claire, still suffering keenly the loss of Allegra, the fruit of her union with Lord Byron, whom she had never lôved, and who had repeatedly scorned her, now had to bear the loss of Shelley whom she had always loved and in whose home she had lived with Mary during most of Shelley's married life She drew away to Vienna to find a retreat for her sorrows Mary was left to share her desolation with Jane Williams, whose beauty had stirred Shelley to lyric ecstasy, and to make shift for a while, as best she could, at Genoa with the Hunts Hither she brought her sole remaining child, Percy Florence, but the Hunt ménage of bad housekeeping, financial chaos, and mischievous children who took delight in teasing young Percy, soon brought

strained relations Hunt, too, was indignant at Mary's treatment of Shelley during the last years Trelawny in a wave of generosity had given him the heart of Shelley that he had snatched from the flames, and only after Mary had worn Hunt down with her clamor for it, did Hunt relinquish it

The quarrel over Shelley's heart was symbolic All of Shelley's friends, possessed with the passion of discipleship, felt that they owned his heart, and each one thought his vision of Shelley the true one, each one thought himself best fitted to explain to the world the wonders of this fascinating and elusive Elf

But Mary most of all persisted in regarding him as "My Shelley" Even before he had passed to join Keats in the abode where the Eternal are, Mary had assumed superintendence over the details of Shelley's life, forever going over his correspondence, commenting on it in postscripts, copying it in her own hand until Shelley in several letters was moved to express great annoyance at his wife's continual prying into his writings.

No one knew better than she that there were two main phases of Shelley, the radiant poet of her romantic devotion, the impetuous and generous creature of pure fire and spirit who irresistibly captured the love and esteem of many men and women as diverse as Hogg, Peacock, Trelawny, Hunt, Byron, Elizabeth Hitchener, Harriet Westbrook, Claire Clairmont, and Emilia Viviani, and the other Shelley whose kiss was as the kiss of death and whose touch in the real world was a whirlwind of devastation, upsetting the life of nearly everyone with whom it came into contact and leaving an appalling trail of acrimonious litigation, financial chaos, childbirth and death, double suicide and disaster behind him.

No one knew better than she that there were also two Marys—the Mary who was the patient and devoted wife, and the Mary whose melancholia and ill-health, whose jealousy of Claire and of Jane Williams, whose quarrels with Medwin, Byron, and Guiccioli, and others of the Italian group, made Shelley's last years an intermittent hell.

Shelley on his part found Mary, as he termed it, lacking in understanding, and shortly before his death he bitterly wrote to Gisborne, June 18, 1822, in much the same vein in which he had earlier written about his first wife, Harriet Westbrook

> I only feel the want of those who can feel, and understand me Whether from proximity and the continuity of domestic intercourse, Mary does not. The necessity of concealing from her thoughts that would pain her, necessitates this, perhaps. It is the curse of Tantalus, that a person possessing such excellent powers and so pure a mind as hers, should not excite the sympathy indispensable to their application to domestic life.[1]

[1] Ingpen, Roger, Julian Edition of Shelley's *Works*, volume X, pp 402-403

Mary, it will be seen, suffered in turn some of the pangs that Harriet had undergone, both girls having insisted on marriage, to which Shelley, against his temperament and declared beliefs, yielded

The difficulty with the Shelley worshippers is that they cannot bring themselves to realize or to admit that Shelley, as the family's persistent attempts to suppress the record show, believed in and practiced free love throughout his life, his poetic version of his passionate creed written the year before his death being by far the most eloquent ever written

> True Love in this differs from gold and clay,
> That to divide is not to take away
> Love is like understanding, that grows bright,
> Gazing on many truths, 'tis like thy light,
> Imagination! which from earth and sky,
> And from the depths of human fantasy,
> As from a thousand prisms and mirrors fills
> The Universe with glorious beams, and kills
> Error, the worm, with many a sun-like arrow
> Of its reverberated lightning Narrow
> The heart that loves, the brain that contemplates,
> The life that wears, the spirit that creates
> One object, and one form, and builds thereby
> A sepulchre for its eternity (*Epipsychidion*)

This passage differs not a whit from his frequent early declarations of 1810-11, for example: "Love! dearest, sweetest power! how much are we indebted to thee! How much superior are even thy miseries to the pleasures which arise from other sources! how much superior to 'fat, contented ignorance' is even the agony which thy votaries experience!" (Ingpen, Julian VIII, 25)

His detestation of marriage, which he was destined twice to enter with reluctance, after threats of suicide by both Harriet and Mary, he revealed early in 1811 in no equivocal manner:

> I have not only to conquer all the hateful prejudices of superstition, not only to conquer duty to a father—*duty*,—indeed, of all kinds . Yet marriage, Godwin says, is hateful, detestable A kind of ineffable, sickening disgust seizes my mind when I think of this most despotic, most unrequired fetter which prejudice has forged to confine its energies Yes! This is the fruit of superstition, and superstition must perish before this can fall! (Ingpen, *op cit.* p 93).

No one accepted Godwin's doctrines of marriage as set forth in *Political Justice* with more enthusiasm, unless it be Mary and Claire, but with the difference that they subsequently repudiated these early teachings of Father Godwin, Shelley, never.

What Shelley required quite as much as feminine charm was the incessant clash of minds, somebody to argue with endlessly He set his various lady-loves at once to school, he belabored Harriet with Latin, and Mary with Greek, and both struggled to climb up to his high plane of reading and abstract thinking He tried vainly to school Mary in metaphysics, but the highest Mary ever reached under the stimulus was her Gothic horror, *Frankenstein* She disliked Peacock because he drew Shelley away from sentiment and absorbed him in animated discussions of Greek literature, for both Peacock and Hogg took great delight with each other and with Shelley in exploring the fine points of classical learning and bandying Greek texts—a sphere in which Mary, in spite of her endeavors, was incompetent She grew petulant when Hogg maliciously pointed out her inaccuracies

The group was always endeavoring "to feel poetry and understand philosophy," and Claire came the nearest of all Shelley's loves to meeting these demands He soon became bored with Harriet's mind and concluded that she was a 'noble animal', he thought he had found in Mary a soul mate who could "feel poetry and understand philosophy"—but presently he discovered she wanted him to "feel poetry" only with her, that she had an excess of possessive sentiment and sensibility, but no capacity, as he complained, "to understand" him To escape boredom he insisted that Claire live with them not only because he loved her and was solicitious for her, but also because three in a discussion were always better than two It would have been a strenuous task for any one man or woman to keep pace with Shelley's learning and Shelley's mind, for he mastered ancient and modern languages with astonishing ease, and he read voluminously, thought intensely, and argued endlessly When Shelley had plumbed the shallows of Mary's mind, he reached out for other women's minds to explore and to proselyte and continually called from afar for his men friends, Hogg, Peacock, Hunt, Trelawny or Byron to join in the fray Intellectual activity at fever pitch was Shelley's life blood, bread and tea hastily snatched and devoured at odd intervals sufficed for his restless body Any one, therefore, who reduces, as friendly moralists or hostile critics have done, Shelley's life or Byron's, at best to a violation of proprieties, at worst to a mere sordid and repulsive sex chase, fails completely to comprehend the reach and power of their imaginative gifts which conferred immortality, not only upon their associates, but upon everyone connected with them. How today should the Countess Guiccioli, or Mary, or Claire, or the rest be remembered had they not met, loved, and suffered with the vibrant and turbulent spirits of Byron or of Shelley?

Shelley's passion for perfection in love was matched in intensity only by his unalterable hatred of Christianity and the institution of marriage. As early as 1810 he exclaimed to Hogg

> O! I burn with impatience for the moment of Christianity's dissolution, it has injured me I swear on the altar of perjured Love to revenge myself on the hated cause of the effect, which *even now* I can scarcely help deploring (Ingpen, *op cit* p 24)

Certain hopeful souls like Stopford Brooke, Browning, and Maria Jane Jewsbury comforted themselves with the thought that had Shelley lived he would have come through "the burning desert of Infidelity", but Trelawny records that in the last days Shelley was oblivious to the beauties of Italian cathedrals, his hatred of institutional religions of all sorts was so bitter he would not enter them

The following masterpiece written to Taaffe, which Ingpen places between June 11 and June 18, 1822, also shows that just before his death Shelley was still carrying on his battle with the Christian God, but now in a Byronic, Don Juan manner rather than with the violence of his youthful diatribe in notes to *Queen Mab*

> Sunday noon
>
> Dear Taaffe
>
> I am not convinced,—if God damns me, even by making me my own hell (as indeed sometimes when I am in an ill humor, he does in this life) it by no means follows that I *must* desire to be so damned I may think it extremely disagreeable as I do to be in an ill temper, & wish to God that God would not have damned me either in this or any other manner—I confess I cannot understand how I should be necessitated to desire to be damned under any circumstances, although I am easily conscious that I should be necessitated to be damned, & if your argument is as lucid as my apprehension of it is obscure I am sure I deserve to be damned for my stupidity, though I cannot fancy how I should desire to be everlastingly tormented for that or any other of my numerous sins
>
> Remember that I am predestined to everlasting damnation, merely because I doubt whether either I or anyone else will ever be damned, and therefore if I arrive in Hell before you do in Heaven I will endeavor to inform you how far I desire to be punished everlastingly
>
> It is very *odious* of you not to have sent me your ode of which however to speak seriously I have spoken very highly
>
> Yours very faithfully
>
> S
>
> N B. I just forgot to say that a man cannot be said to *desire* that which he possesses How, therefore, can *every man* (*his own hell*) desire to be damned when he is damned

If Matthew Arnold had read more of Shelley's letters he might have qualified his accusation of Shelley's "utter deficiency in humour" No one

lacks a sense of humour. What arouses laughter in one leaves another unmoved

Shelley critics like Leigh Hunt have also carelessly stated that in his last years he wholly repudiated, as a youthful indiscretion, his *Queen Mab,* which he had tried to suppress. The truth is that he repudiated the *poetic immaturities* of the poem, but specifically stated that he had not altered the *views* therein promulgated [2]

John Cordy Jeaffreson in *The Real Shelley* looked down his nose at Shelley's boyish high jinks and want of decorum, but in his own vein of the ridiculous Shelley was hardly repressible—as when he read in a public library a hostile review of his poetry and could hardly contain his laughter over its utter absurdities.

In view, therefore, of what Mary lived through with Shelley in Italy, most preposterous is the thesis of her daughter-in-law, Lady Shelley, phrased by the reviewer of her *Shelley and Mary.* "the eight years of his [Shelley's] life which followed were spent in the closest and most complete union of two minds and hearts joined in perfect sympathy and constant devotion."[3]

This rosy picture of Mary and Shelley, perpetuated in Mrs. Julian Marshall's official biography of Mary, written under the close supervision of Lady Shelley, has been repeated in the biographies of Mary by Helen Moore, Lucy M. Rossetti, Richard Church, and by R Glynn Grylls of our time It is by no means altogether false, for there were moments of the old rapture and devotion that we find in their letters of 1815 But Mary's speedy repudiation of the life of this Italian set after Shelley's death is eloquent testimony that she did not belong in it and that she did not find these years in Italy the unadulterated bliss and harmony which her biographers have depicted On the contrary, what she really desired and never had with Shelley was a life of peaceful domesticity in respectable society, this she was determined to have with her son Percy now Years after in 1835 she confessed to Mrs Gisborne· "As I grow older I look upon fidelity as the first of human virtues—and am going to write a novel to display my opinion "[4]

And yet on Shelley's death she was prostrate with remorse that she had not been less of a vixen She regretted that she had been as cold to his embraces as the chaste goddess, the moon, as Shelley had described her in "Epipsychidion", and as she confessed in her poem, "The Choice", written after his death. She was, therefore, determined with the iron will she inherited from her mother that so far as the world was concerned the seraphic Shelley and the angelic Mary alone should be known to posterity

[2] Woodberry, G E *Shelley's Poetical Works,* 1901, p 2
[3] *Edinburgh Review* 156 476 October, 1882
[4] Jones, Frederick L *The Letters of Mary Shelley,* 1944, II, 108

> And you, my own boy! I am about to begin a task which, if you live, will be an invaluable treasure to you in after times I must collect my materials, and then, in the commemoration of the divine virtues of your father, I shall fulfil the only act of pleasure there remains for me [5]

These were the Shelley and Mary that Lady Shelley, the wife of Mary's Sir Percy Florence, afterwards canonized in her *Shelley Memorials* in 1859 and in her privately printed journal of *Shelley and Mary* in 1882, as well as in the statue of the dying Shelley in Mary's arms, placed, where Shelley would have greeted it with high-pitched laughter, in Christchurch, Hants

There were, moreover, weighty practical reasons why Mary should rapidly change from radical to conservative, from the reckless and irresponsible ways of the Regency to the sober dictates of Victorianism She had seen enough and suffered enough from the vagaries of free love coteries, her life had been a constant turmoil of moving from one place to another, of repeated childbirth and death, she had always felt keenly the social ostracism in England at Marlow and afterward in Italy where all avenues of English society were closed, and her friends for the most part were inferior and few Shelley's death left her, as well as his creditors, destitute The numerous post-obit encumbrances that he had signed at exorbitant rates were a plague to his money-lenders and to his heirs Horace Smith, his faithful friend and banker, lost heavily on Shelley's death at sea by which his life insurance was forfeited [6]

2. MARY'S LIFE WITH SHELLEY IN RETROSPECT

Shelley's whirlwind existence and passion for perfection in love, like the loaves and fishes of the parable, increased with division A brief résumé of his turbulent career with the brothers and sisters of his soul will demonstrate what Mary had lived through with him to the scandal and horror of English society, and what a formidable task lay ahead of her to establish herself in England and, before her death in 1851, to change the execration of Shelley to the worship of Shelley

Neither in Mary's biography, in her notes to the poems, nor in her edition of Shelley's essays and letters is there any intimation that Shelley had never been content with a cottage for two If Shelley had had cause to complain at one time of the ever-present Eliza Westbrook, so might her sister, Harriet, and Mary Godwin both have inveighed justifiably against the con-

[5] *Shelley Memorials From Authentic Sources* Edited by Lady Shelley Boston, 1859, p 257

[6] Robinson, Henry Crabb, *On Books and Their Writers* Edited by Edith J Morley London, 1938, I, 361

stant intrusion of sisters and brothers of his soul, who formed a procession that ceased only with his death

A few days after Shelley's marriage to Harriet Westbrook (August 28, 1811), Hogg came to live with them at Edinburgh and subsequently at York where he planned to finish his study of law In late October Eliza joined the group After Hogg's unwelcome overtures to Harriet, Shelley took Eliza and Harriet away to Keswick where they remained until the beginning of February, 1812, when they departed for Ireland only to return two months later and settle in Wales.

From the autumn of 1811 to June, 1812, Shelley had been trying with a vocabulary as fervent as platonic to persuade Elizabeth Hitchener to become the sister of his soul and to live with them 'forever.' Harriet, docilely echoing her husband, added her entreaties Finally, Miss Hitchener unwisely gave up her teaching and arrived July, 1812, at their lodgings in Lynmouth

Early in October the four went to London to meet the philosopher Godwin whom Shelley for months had been wooing by mail There he also met his life-long friend Thomas Love Peacock, and the Newtons, and renewed his friendship with Hogg The fierce struggle that now ensued for Shelley's attentions between Elizabeth Hitchener on the one side and Eliza and Harriet Westbrook on the other ended in Shelley's dismissal of Miss Hitchener, who from the "sister of my soul" had now become the "Brown Demon." Perhaps also the supply of new friends made it easier for Shelley to give Miss Hitchener her congé on November 8, 1812 even to the tune of a settlement of £100 per annum.

The 'Green Dragon,' as Eliza had now become, was still with them when they returned to Wales by the middle of November, and also when they sailed again for Ireland in March. They invited Hogg to visit them in Dublin As they did not wait for his arrival, but left Dublin for Killarney, he returned, disgusted, to London where Harriet and Shelley subsequently followed him, for once without Eliza, whom they had left at Killarney. Shortly afterwards, however, she arrived, though she divided her attentions between them and her father.

Shelley now found new excitement in the society of the Boinvilles and the Newtons, who were vegetafians and advocates of air-bathing. He followed the Boinvilles to Bracknell in the middle of July, the particular attraction at this time being Cornelia Turner and her mother Mrs Boinville, "the most admirable specimen of a human being he had ever seen," as he declared years afterward.

After the birth of Ianthe, his first child by Harriet, Eliza returned In the fall, after a trip with Peacock and Harriet to the Lake region and Edinburgh, Shelley returned shortly before December 10 and took sleeping quarters, probably sometime in February, at Mrs. Boinville's home while Harriet was going back and forth to her father's His attentions to Cornelia Turner were

now so pressing, as Harriet alleged to Mrs Godwin later, that the husband in alarm carried Cornelia off to Devonshire

At the same time Shelley was finding new fascinations in the three girls of Godwin's household Fanny Imlay, or Godwin, as she was called by courtesy—the illegitimate child of Gilbert Imlay and Mary Wollstonecraft; Claire Clairmont, the daughter of the second Mrs Godwin, and Mary, the daughter of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft In May, the second Mrs. Godwin sent Fanny off to Wales because she feared Fanny would fall in love with Shelley. Claire thereupon became on his walks "the sister of his soul" When Mary returned from Scotland, she succeeded in monopolizing his ardors until he had made her an open declaration of love Godwin and Harriet's strenuous efforts to break up this attachment proved futile. After threats of suicide by Mary and attempts at suicide by Shelley, they eloped to the Continent on July 28. Characteristically, Shelley took company along, this time Claire Clairmont, who could converse in French As Hogg shrewdly observed, Shelley always required a third person, man or woman, as "a prop"

On August 13, 1814, Shelley wrote to Harriet asking her to come and live with them in Switzerland She refused One month later, after his trio had returned bankrupt and had sought financial aid from Harriet, Shelley consulted Basil Montagu to ascertain whether Harriet could not be compelled to live with them Montagu, with some difficulty, convinced him that the idea was neither legal nor feasible. Claire, however, continued to live with them until May, 1815 Before her departure, Hogg at Mary's insistence had joined the household He had been a constant visitor and had sustained Mary at the time of her baby's death while Shelley was "walking out" with Claire As early as January Mary had promised, as soon as she was able, to enter a free-love relationship with him, and on March 10 he moved into their lodgings and stayed until April 17,[1] an episode which we discuss more fully in Part IV.

This ménage, however, could not last. After Hogg had fallen out with Mary and left, and Mary had succeeded in despatching Claire to Lynmouth, she wrote in her diary on May 13, the optimistic comment "I begin a new Journal with our regeneration." As the next entry preserved in the journal, however, is dated July, 1816, it is not known where Mary and Shelley lived from May 13 to August, 1815 We know they were at Bishopsgate from August, 1815, to the spring of 1816 Although Peacock, Godwin, and Charles Clairmont were frequent visitors, Mary during this period apparently had Shelley to herself, the only time we can discover when her life with Shelley was free from other devotees When they left for Geneva on May 3, Claire had rejoined them to carry on the liaison she had begun with Lord Byron early in the year

[1] White, Newman Ivey *Shelley* New York, 1940, I, 391-393

At Geneva there was relative harmony, in spite of the gossip and curiosity of the English tourists, because Claire was then Byron's mistress, and her attention was diverted from Shelley. Because Byron would not assume responsibility for Claire after he had tired of her, Shelley took her back to England with Mary Fanny Imlay's suicide by laudanum on October 9 and Harriet's by drowning in the Serpentine (discovered December 10) were further experiences to harrow Shelley's fateful year of 1816.

Claire, however, remained with Percy and Mary during the rest of their stay in England. When she gave birth in January, 1817, to Byron's child, Allegra, the residents of Marlow wondered and kept wondering until March 11, 1818, when the trio and children left for Italy Here Claire continued to live with them until October, 1820, when Mary had her despatched to Florence. She corresponded with them constantly, however, and Shelley repeatedly urged her to return to them She complied with periodic visits, frequent enough to fill Mary with unrest.

In November and December of 1819 Shelley found a new attraction in Sophia Stacey, a ward of his uncle, Mr Robert Parker. This relationship was not of long duration as she left for Rome in December. His friendship with the Gisbornes, especially Mrs. Gisborne, succeeded his interest in Sophia Thomas Medwin, Shelley's unscrupulous cousin, added to their troubles in the autumn of 1820. The house would have had another occupant had Keats accepted Shelley's invitation of July 27

Shelley next turned his affection to Emilia Viviani, an Italian girl residing in a convent by order of her father. Until her marriage Shelley devoted to her much of the time he had been accustomed to lavish on Claire, and he had to reassure Claire by mail there was nothing of what she called 'love' in the relationship By the early autumn of 1821, however, Emilia's request for money brought the sudden collapse of his ideal.

> They have made a great fuss at Pisa about my intimacy with this lady [wrote Shelley to Lord Byron on September 14] Pray do not mention anything of what I told you, as the whole truth is not known and Mary might be very much annoyed at it . . I pronounce you secure against any of my female friends here I will trust you with Mrs W. [Jane Williams].

Mary punctuated the end of this affair with a dry remark about "Shelley's Italian Platonics." Meanwhile, Mary had been undergoing other emotional turmoils when Shelley was also in the summer of 1821 involved in a futile attempt to silence the Hoppner story, which we refer to later on

Parallel to his attachment to Emilia was the slow growth of Shelley's affection for Jane Williams, the wife by courtesy of Ellerker Williams. At first Williams's love for sailing stimulated their friendship, but soon Jane's guitar and her sweetness and calm disposition soothed Shelley when he was

nervous and irritable When his passion culminated in the suggestion that they overturn the boat and die together—Jane's level head finally succeeded in getting the boat near enough so that she could jump into the water and wade to shore Like her subsequent intimate, Hogg, she believed in a certain discretion in affairs of the heart

Still Shelley felt the need of his old friends about him. As Hogg and Peacock had both refused his invitations to come to Italy, Shelley sought out Leigh Hunt Not sharing Shelley's faith in the proposed periodical, *The Liberal,* Byron and his friends urged that the Hunts remain in England with their brood, but the Hunts themselves were eager to escape from their financial and other troubles at home, and came down upon Byron and Shelley, much to the former's disgust and the latter's delight

By this time, Mary had accepted with reservations Shelley's new enthusiasm, Edward Trelawny, an adventurer friend of the Williamses, who joined them at Pisa in January, 1822. Trelawny's six-months' friendship grew into a lifelong devotion to Shelley and to his memory.

At Casa Magni, in May, the Williamses joined the household to the trial of the tempers of both Mary and Jane, who had different ideas of housekeeping The death of Claire's daughter by Byron at the Convent of Bagnacavallo on April 19 precipitated another emotional upheaval with periodic visits from Claire. After Shelley's death in 1822 Claire resided with Mary for only brief periods, but on and off they remained on affectionate terms until Mary's death in 1851—as Mary's numerous letters of advice to Claire through the years, many of which have never been published, amply testify

Shelley's death, in the Gulf of Spezzia, brought, as we have seen, disintegration to the group of devotees who had attracted him in his search for perfection in love How long he would have continued the quest had death not stopped him is a matter of conjecture

The number and the fate of the children involved during these years may be discerned by the following chart of infant births and deaths in the Shelley circle.

CHILDREN BY HARRIET

Ianthe	Born either at Pimlico or Cooke's Hotel before June 28, 1813 Brought up by Eliza Westbrook Died June 18, 1876.
Charles	Born one month prematurely, November 30, 1814 Brought up by Sir Timothy Shelley Died at Field Place, September 14, 1826.

CHILDREN BY MARY

First Child	Allegedly born more than two months prematurely at lodgings in London, February 22, 1815 Died March 6, 1815

William	Born at Bishopsgate, January 24, 1816 Died at Rome, June 7, 1819
Clara	Born at Marlow, September 2, 1817 Died at Venice, September 24, 1818
Percy Florence	Born at Florence, November 12, 1819 Died December 5, 1889
Last Child	Miscarried June 16, 1822
	CHILDREN BY CLAIRE
Allegra	Child of Byron and Claire Born at Bath, January 12, 1817 Died at the Convent of Bagnacavallo, April 19, 1822.
Elena Adelaide	She may or may not have been Shelley's child Born at Naples, December 27, 1818 Died at Naples, June 9, 1820

Two children under the care of Shelley and Mary, after suffering from the frequent changes of place, and from irregular vegetarian diet, which Byron called "starvation and green fruit", succumbed to the ravages of Italian fever Shelley's children by Harriet, while under the care of Eliza, thrived Ianthe lived until 1876 Charles, when removed to Field Place, died in 1826 and left the baronetcy to Mary's boy, Percy Florence

After Shelley's death the kindness of Trelawny who provided Mary with money for her journey to England alleviated her immediate financial difficulties. Through Peacock's efforts she secured in 1825 from Sir Timothy, Shelley's father, £100 a year additional to the sum Byron had wrested from him. At first he was loath to give her anything, and only gradually through the years did he allow her and her boy increased annuities, but with the provision always that all money received by Mary from him should be paid back by her to his estate with interest. In spite of continual begging requests through Whitton, Sir Timothy's lawyer, that Sir Timothy send her various sums for her boy's expenses at Harrow, and make appointments to talk with her, he steadily refused to meet her, though he yielded so far as to receive the boy for visits now and then at long intervals. Sir Timothy's wife, Elizabeth, incensed that Mary's son, rather than Harriet's, was to receive the baronetcy, proceeded to encumber and squander the estate so that there should be little left Years later Sir Percy had to pay more than £2000 to recover the house and farm at Field Place, and he and his mother for a protracted period were involved in liquidating Shelley's post obit commitments Moreover, much to the exasperated distress of Claire, Hunt, and Mary—Sir Timothy continued to live on for twenty-two years after Shelley's death. Not until

1844 did Claire receive the £12,000 bequeathed in Shelley's will, Hunt an annuity in lieu of his £5,000, and Mary, the residue she had been sorely needing to train her young gentleman at Harrow and Cambridge for the baronetcy

Mary's even greater task, however, was to counteract the scandalous reputation in England the meteor-like career of her husband had left behind

3. SHELLEY'S REPUTATION IN ENGLAND

We need to understand how formidable the gossip and scandal about Shelley had been from 1815 on to realize with what perturbation Mary must have faced a return to England The notoriety of Shelley's elopement with Mary, Harriet's suicide, their sojourn with Claire and Allegra at Marlow and previously with Byron at Geneva, had by no means been forgotten.

We may get some idea of Shelley's moral reputation in England among the literati by quoting the covert attacks on him as late as 1818 by John Taylor Coleridge, who went out of his way in his review of Hunt's *Foliage* to refer to Shelley's "disgraceful and flagitious history" He remembers Shelley at Eton

> Setting fire to old trees with burning glasses, no unmeet emblem for a man, who perverts his ingenuity and knowledge to the attacking of all that is ancient and venerable in our civil and religious institutions . The vain and disappointed man, the factious citizen, the adulterer—and he, if such there be, who thinks even adultery vapid unless he can render it more exquisitely poignant by adding incest to it, all these must find a creed unattractive, that enjoins humility, order, purity of heart and practice . We are at a loss for the decency which rails at marriage, or the honour which pollutes it, and we have still a reluctance to condemn as a low prejudice the mysterious feeling of separation, which consecrates, and draws to closer intimacy the communion of brothers and sisters We may be very narrow-minded, but we look upon it still as somewhat dishonourable to have been expelled from a University for the monstrous absurdity of a 'mathematical demonstration of the non-existence of a God,' according to our understanding, it is not proof of a very affectionate heart to break that of a wife by cruelty and infidelity. .[1]

This is the review that Shelley charged Southey with writing, in the celebrated correspondence between them He wrote to Leigh Hunt "It makes me melancholy to consider the dreadful wickedness of heart which would have prompted such expressions as those in which the anonymous writer exults

[1] *Quarterly Review* 18 327-329, May, 1818

over my domestic calamities and the perversion of understanding with which he paints your character"

Of this attack, Lord Byron said

> Shame on the man who could wound an already bleeding heart, —be barbarous enough to revive the memory of a fatal event that Shelley was perfectly innocent of,—and found scandal on falsehood![2]

Another sample of the gossip current at this time about Shelley's ménage with Byron at Geneva may be found in a letter to Scott:

> He [Shelley] went abroad with both his conquests, the wedded and unwedded *philosophers,* and as Lord Byron was in want of such a convenience, the unwedded lady was made over to him, and the whole party have been living together for some time The acknowledged children produced by this Quadruple Alliance are *Frankenstein* and a canto of *Childe Harold* now in the press[3]

Even two years after Shelley's death a writer who signs the name "Harroviensis", reviewing Medwin's *Conversations,* says

> The public is assured, at p. 238, that Shelley was 'one of the most moral as well as amiable of men' Why disturb the ashes of his funeral pile, by thus unwillingly compelling us to recall the memory of his vices? Who ever heard the tale of his first wife, the beautiful victim of his lust and infidelity, without execrating the author of her sorrows![4]

We recall, too, Southey's unalterable conviction that Shelley was a depraved and wicked man; and Wordsworth's calling upon Gifford in his forays against Byron not to let Shelley escape castigation

After Southey's death, Mary appealed through Moxon to the second Mrs Southey to return Shelley's letters addressed to Southey in 1821:

> I would not have them published for the world and Mrs Southey will oblige me very greatly by letting me have them. If she has the feelings of a gentlewoman, she will at once[5]

The answer came back that no letters were found but, many years after, they appeared in an Appendix to Southey's correspondence with Catherine Bowles, edited by Edward Dowden in 1881.

[2] Medwin, Thomas *Conversations of Lord Byron* London, 1824, page 226
[3] Morritt, J B S, in *The Private Letter-Books of Sir Walter Scott* edited by Wilfred Partington New York, 1930, page 187
[4] *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 16 539, November, 1824
[5] Walter Spencer Catalogue, no 111, 1902, page 37

4. MARY IN ENGLAND

Mary reluctantly left Italy in 1823 for England to spare her child the pestilence of the Italian summer that had already robbed her of William and Clara She mourned leaving her enchanted and beloved Italy

> The idea of our child's advantage alone enables me to keep fixed in my resolution to return to England It is best for him—and I go[1]

The meanness of Sir Timothy doomed Mary to years of struggle with poverty and a dependence upon the uncertainties of an income from her pen Her signal success with *Frankenstein* in 1818 had brought the renown that continued to attract a reading public to a succession of novels, many of which are veiled and romanticized allegories of her life *Valperga* in 1823 was succeeded by *The Last Man,* 1826, *Perkin Warbeck,* 1830, *Lodore,* 1835, and *Falkner,* 1837 She was also engaged in hackwork—the Italian, Spanish and French lives for *Lardner's Encyclopædia,* two volumes of travels, *Rambles in Germany and Italy,* and various articles for periodicals. None of these can be said to have added greatly to her reputation in literature. Her *Frankenstein,* written under the stimulus of Byron and Shelley, alone has achieved immortality, though Professor Frederick Jones calls belated attention to the excellencies of *Valperga*

When Mary, against the advice of Hogg and other friends, decided to return to England, Hunt provided letters of introduction to his friends Novello, the musician, and Horace Smith, and she presently received welcome in the circle of the Lambs and the Cowden Clarkes, to whom were added Tom Moore, Landor, Barry Cornwall, Hazlitt, Crabb Robinson, Rogers, Lord Dillon, Hon Mrs Norton, John Murray, the Beauclercs, and the Dean Pauls Moreover, when she landed she found herself famous, for *Frankenstein* was being played at the English Opera House

By December 22, 1824, she had bēcome the "interesting and charming creature" that Crabb Robinson found her when he visited Godwin's for tea The sinister Mary of the last years of Shelley's life, however, continued to hang over the scene, and threatened at any time, through the gossip of such intimates as Lady Blessington, to destroy the fair picture of respectability she had set out to build On September 28, 1832, Robinson records that

> Lady Blessington says that Byron's hatred of Southey originated in Southey's saying that Lord Byron was *the lover of two sisters,* Mrs Shelley and Miss Clairmont—not that he was offended by the immorality imputed to him, but the bad taste of loving so

[1] *Shelley Memorials, op cit,* page 264 This is an entry from Mary's private journal, May 31, 1823

> vulgar a woman as Mrs Shelley By the bye, on my denying the vulgarity of Mrs Shelley, Landor concurred in Lord Byron's judgment I am more likely to be convinced of the justness of other imputations on Mrs Shelley She was hated intensely by Lord Byron, indeed, he also could not endure Miss Clairmont though she had a child by him—she forced herself on him, and declared she would have a child by the greatest poet of the age! Mrs Shelley is said to be a great liar This was Lord Byron's opinion of her, and she is accused of having opened a packet of letters from Lord Byron to Countess Guiccioli entrusted to her by Count Gamba, from which she supplied extracts to Moore With difficulty, the Guiccioli has got back the letters and means now, at some future time, to publish them and take her revenge on Mrs Shelley Mrs Shelley sent to Lady Blessington to request her forbearance towards herself, and still more her sister, who would be ruined were an exposure to take place! "This," said Lady Blessington, "I replied I should do out of regard to my sex" Lord Byron was enraged that to the very last Shelley could never be made conscious of the artificial character and worthlessness of his wife [2]

The rest of Mary's life-long task was to present Shelley and his works to the world in a favorable light, to silence the gossip and calumnies, and to educate the future Sir Percy "to think as other people do"

However liberal she may have professed her ideas of love to be when she was engaged in snatching Shelley away from Harriet and experimenting in free love with Hogg, she was, like her mother, at heart an intensely possessive woman who sought—and sought in vain—for a single and steadfast devotion She repeatedly referred to Shelley as "My Shelley" as if to reinforce in her own spirit a possession she only fitfully and despairingly maintained· " for I am still his—still the chosen one of that blessed spirit—still vowed to him forever and ever!"[3]

The Hoppner Story

It can scarcely be doubted, nevertheless, that Claire, who Mary said had been the bane of her existence since she was three, supplied a warmth of passion and an intellectual badinage that served real needs in Shelley's life However much at times he was exasperated by Claire's tantrums and fits of stubborn perverseness, he was always unhappy when she was not living with them and, as we have seen, she was present during most of Shelley's married life Paradise to Mary would have been a cottage in a remote place with

[2] Robinson, *op cit*, pages 412-413
[3] *Shelley Memorials*, p 256

Shelley and "absentia Clarıa", but Shelley never for long was content After a time he would begin, against Mary's specific wishes, an open or clandestine correspondence with Claire ending in an invitation to come live with them [4] This obvious dependence upon her which began from the moment when at Godwin's she had become the 'sister of his soul' and accompanied Mary and Shelley on their elopment in 1814, is breathed forth in the typical letter of frustration and longing which he wrote from Pisa in 1821, only seven months before his death And the handsome legacy to her of £12,000 is silent though eloquent testimony to the genuine obligation and affection he felt. "Shelley", says Roger Ingpen, "never wrote any letters that reveal more frankly the tender and poetic side of his character than those which he sent to Jane [Claire] Clairmont."[5]

Pisa, Dec 11, 1821

My dearest Friend,

I should be very glad to receive a confidential letter from you—one totally the reverse of those I write you, detailing all your present occupation and intimacies, and giving me some insight into your future plans Do not think that my affection and anxiety for you ever cease, or that I ever love you less although that love has been and still must be a source of disquietude to me.

The Exotic as you please to call me droops in this frost—a frost both moral and physical—a solitude of the heart These last days I have been unable to ride, the cold towards sunset is so excessive and my side reminding me that I am mortal Medwin rides almost constantly with Lord B[yron], and the party sometimes consists of Gamba, Taafe, Medwin and the Exotic who unfortunately belonging to the order of mimosa, thrives ill in so large a society I cannot endure the company of many persons, and the society of one is either great pleasure or great pain

We expect the Hunts every day, but I suppose the tramontana is a fresh wind at Sea and detains them I think I told you they were to live at Lord B[yron]'s

The news of the Greeks continues to be more and more glorious It may be said that the Peloponnesus is entirely free, and that Mavrocordato has been acting a distinguished part, and will probably fill a high rank in the magistracy of the infant republic

What are you doing in German? I have read none since we met, nor probably until we meet again—should that ever be—shall I read it

[4] Shelley's letter to Claire of December 31, 1821, for example, indicates that Mary does not "see this letter or any of yours addressed to me"

[5] Wise, Thomas J *A Shelley Library* Page xvi Claire's name was Clara Mary Jane Clairmont, but she preferred Claire, though she is frequently referred to as Jane, also as Clara, Clare, and "Constantia", Shelley's poetic name for her

I am employed in nothing—I read—but I have no spirits for serious composition—I have no confidence, and to write in solitude or put forth thoughts without sympathy is unprofitable vanity

Tell me dearest what you mean to do, and if it should give you pleasure come and live with us The Williams's always speak of you with praise and affection, and regret very much that you did not spend this winter with them, but neither their regret nor their affection equal mine

Yours ever,
S

By the Shelley devotees this letter would be interpreted as only a little light poetic philandering before breakfast, by others as a forthright statement of his real need, physically and spiritually, for Claire These many letters in the same vein, Claire cherished as her prized possessions in after life, and there is no reason to doubt the truth of her statement, made later, that she had always loved Shelley Her hot pursuit of Byron in the earlier years was the natural reaction to the realization that if she could not possess Shelley wholly, she would show Mary she could capture a poet more famous than Shelley, and one of higher rank. These efforts of Claire took place during those volatile years when Percy, Mary, Hogg, and Claire were pursuing on principle, and trying with amusing and tragic seriousness to live up to, Godwinian views of marriage.

Then there was the most desperate time of all in Naples, when, as the Hoppners declared, Claire was brought to bed with child by Shelley, and Shelley had to record and baptize surreptitiously Elena Adelaide Shelley as the child of him and Mary. Since Professor White's discoveries of these records, those of us who find it impossible to accept his ingenious hypothesis (of a child adopted by Shelley to comfort Mary) in order to relieve Shelley of the so-called Hoppner scandal, are inclined by the evidences, which are by no means conclusive, to believe, as White himself once did, the essential truth back of the Hoppner story Claire had acquired, then, the dubious distinction of bearing a child to each of the poets of Southey's famed Satanic school These children were Allegra and Elena who, like Mary's children, 'Wilmouse' and Clara, died of the ravages of Italian fever.

Mary's dangers, therefore, were real enough During the thirties and forties she was always in fear lest these events of the past might suddenly reintrude and destroy her efforts There was trouble enough living down the Harriet scandal, the Claire story underwent with Claire's cooperation an even more rigorous suppression and for a much more prolonged time.

As late as August 20, 1834, when Mary was making good progress in England, Mrs. Hoppner, whom Crabb Robinson found "a pleasing woman," was repeating to him the story Mary thought she and Shelley had squelched,

and had compelled the Hoppners and Byron to deny, by her spirited if equivocal letter of August 11, 1821 which Shelley importuned her to write, and which under the circumstances she had no recourse other than to do.

> She [Mrs Hoppner] related some curious facts concerning Lord Byron which I never before heard so distinctly or on such good authority His little child which died in Italy was by Miss Clairmont, who, Lord Byron declared, threw herself into his arms He never felt the least regard for her She also had a child by Shelley. On my remarking that I did not suppose that Lord Byron was intimate with Mrs Shelley, Mrs Hoppner assented to this, but said that had such an intimacy arisen, Shelley would have cared little about it He thought such things natural [6]

No protestations of Shelley in his several letters to Southey could erase the poet-laureate's fixed belief in the utter criminality of Byron and Shelley —and his was also the general attitude of English society which Mary had to encounter and overcome

Godwin and Hunt

Mary had two further claimants to her income The perennially indigent Godwin had run through, it is estimated, seventy-five thousand dollars of Shelley's money, and had borrowed and begged right and left from numerous long-suffering admirers, in fact from nearly everyone who dared venture a friendly gesture His affairs after Shelley's death were nearing bankruptcy, and before Mary arrived in England, Mrs Godwin and he had lost the property at Skinner Street and moved to smaller quarters in the Strand Here he greeted Mary and her son with reserved enthusiasm and affection, plus the admonition that she should seek independent quarters, while reminding her of her filial duty to meet his bills, and the years had caused Mrs Godwin to become even more querulous, troublesome, and universally odious

The other drag was the perpetually indigent Leigh Hunt with his Marianne wasting away with tuberculosis, addicted to the bottle, and surreptitiously borrowing money behind his back to buy herself finery and ride out in carriages, her housekeeping a horror to behold when Jane Welsh Carlyle went over to retrieve the silver spoons and other articles Marianne had borrowed There was also her bevy of nine incorrigible children whom Byron had stigmatized as Yahoos when they destroyed or messed up his art objects with their dirty fingers To keep such an establishment going the large-hearted and patient Hunt looked to Mary for aid and to the legacy Percy had left in his will She rose bravely to meet the occasion when he was importunate or

[6] Robinson, *op cit*, page 446

brought along a solicitor to represent his rights and demands For, like Godwin, "his theory was that between friends everything should be in common, he said you could not do your friend a greater favour than constitute him your banker, and that he could receive no greater pleasure than answering your drafts"[7]

Unlike Godwin, however, there were also times when Hunt honorably refused freely proffered aid But this obligation, though at times annoying, Mary cheerfully and generously met

Mary, however, had an advantage other than the success of *Frankenstein.* Since the early days when Thornton Hunt recalled her as slovenly in dress and unprepossessing, now in the eyes of many in the social group she was a comely, attractive widow Charles Cowden Clarke describes her at this time·

> . . with her well-shaped golden-haired head, almost always a little bent and drooping, her marble-white shoulders and arms statuesquely visible in the perfectly plain black velvet dress, which the customs of that time allowed to be cut low, and which her own taste adopted (for neither she nor her sister-in-sorrow [Jane Williams] ever wore the conventional 'widow's weeds' and 'widow's cap'); her thoughtful earnest eyes, her short upper lip and intellectually curved mouth, with a certain close compressed and decisive expression while she listened, and a little relaxation into fuller redness and mobility when speaking, her exquisitely formed white dimpled small hands, with rosy palms and plumply commencing fingers, that tapered into tips as slender and delicate as those in a Vandyk picture—all remain palpably present to my memory[8]

The Posthumous Poems *of 1824*

When, by August 30, 1823, she was settled in 'neat and cheap' London lodgings, she set about her long task of presenting her ideal Shelley to the world She wished Leigh Hunt to write a short preface for Shelley's *Posthumous Poems,* but his absence in Italy caused the volume to appear without it in the spring of 1824. While she was assiduously collecting materials for a biography of Shelley and trying in vain to obtain manuscripts in the hands of the Westbrook family she was abruptly checked in her course by Sir Timothy who forbade further sales of *Posthumous Poems* then "selling tolerably well" More than 300 copies had been sold when Sir Timothy ordered the remainder

[7] Trelawny, Edward John *Records of Shelley, Byron and the Author* London, Routledge (preface 1878) Page x

[8] Moore, Helen *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley* Philadelphia, Lippincott, 1886 Page 299

suppressed, and threatened to cut off the small stipend he was paying her if she brought "dear Shelley's name" before the public during his lifetime.

Mary's Protests to Hunt

His injunction suited in a measure her own choice, if not that of Shelley's friends, for she informed Hunt she could not think of writing memoirs now. In fact she dreaded the publicity Peacock came forward with his usual kindness and helped her through these publishing difficulties Hunt, however, aroused her apprehensions by venturing in 1825 to write a review of *Posthumous Poems* including biographical matter When he submitted his manuscript, however, to the *Westminster Review,* Bowring, with a canny sense of possible difficulty, sent it to "some of Shelley's most intimate friends" R Hunter told Hunt that the friends had told Bowring that.

> the facts were not correct, that you were acquainted with only part of Mr Shelley's history and that the narrative was fabulous The persons whom he mentioned as having seen the manuscript and as having given this opinion were Mr Peacock, Mr Coulson and Mrs Shelley He further informed me that Mr Peacock had delivered the manuscript to Mrs Shelley, in whose hands he believes it now remains [9] [Peacock vetoed it because it disparaged Harriet and whitewashed Shelley's treatment of her]

Hunt was hurt and wrote Mary for the mollifying explanation she sent on December 28, 1825

> It regards Shelley and Harriet, where you found your reasoning on a mistake as to fact They did not part by mutual consent, and Shelley's justification, to me obvious, rests on other grounds, so that you would be obliged to remodel a good part of your writing Peacock was urgent that such a mistake should not pass, and on account of various arrangements with Sir Timothy Shelley was unwilling that it should be printed. . . . Peacock is in possession of the Ms [10]

Nevertheless Hunt, who could not be induced to write a word against Shelley, was not to be hindered for long in giving out his recollections Still smarting under the humiliations he had received from Byron, he took the opportunity in 1828 to pay back old scores by revealing in *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* how despicable Byron was in contrast to the angelic Shelley—a proceeding that brought down upon him the withering satire of Moore.

[9] Brewer, Luther A , *My Leigh Hunt Library,* 1938, pp 148-149
[10] Wise, Thomas J *A Shelley Library* Pages 6-7

Mary could not have been greatly disturbed by the idealized picture Hunt drew, but in the following year when remonstrating with Trelawny she flatly stated, as quoted below, that Hunt had slurred over the real truth No one knew better than she on what terms Harriet and Shelley had parted, and in objecting to Hunt's review of 1825 she specifically repudiated the statement he continually made, whenever he referred to the separation, that Harriet and Shelley had "parted by mutual consent"

Mary's Protests to Trelawny

Mary's anxiety is clearly betrayed in the following letters to Trelawny begging him to desist from writing about Shelley and refusing to send him any of the materials he insistently demanded.

On March 11, 1829 Trelawny wrote.

> My principal object in writing to you now is to tell you that I am actually writing my own life Brown and Landor are spurring me on, and are to review it sheet by sheet, as it is written, moreover, I am commencing as a tribute of my great love for the memory of Shelley his life and moral character Landor and Brown are in this to have a hand, therefore I am collecting every information regarding him I always wished you to do this, Mary; if you will not, as of the living I love him and you best, incompetent as I am, I must do my best to show him to the world as I found him Do you approve of this? Will you aid in it? without which it cannot be done Will you give me documents? Will you write anecdotes? or—be explicit on this, dear—give me your opinion, if you in the least dislike it, say so, and there is an end of it, if on the contrary, set about doing it without loss of time Both this and my life will be sent you to peruse and approve or alter before publication, and I need not say that you will have free scope to expunge all you disapprove of.[11]

In April, 1829 Mary replied:

> With regard to the other subject, you may guess, my dear Friend, that I have often thought, often done more than think on the subject There is nothing I shrink from more fearfully than publicity I have too much of it, and, what is worse, I am forced by my hard situation to meet it in a thousand ways Could you write my husband's life without naming me, it would be something, but even then I should be terrified at rousing the slumbering voice of the public, each critique, each mention of your

[11] *Trelawny, Edward John, Letters of,* edited with a brief introduction and notes by H Buxton Forman London, Oxford University Press, 1910 Page 117

> work might drag me forward Nor indeed is it possible to write Shelley's life in that way Many men have his opinions,—none heartily and conscientiously act on them as he did,—it is his act that marks him.
> You know me, or you do not—in which case I will tell you what I am—a silly goose, who, far from wishing to stand forward to assert myself in any way, now that I am alone in the world, have but the time to wrap night and the obscurity of insignificance around me. This is weakness, but I cannot help it, to be in print, the subject of men's observations, of the bitter hard world's commentaries, to be attacked or defended, this ill becomes one who knows how little she possesses worthy to attract attention, and whose chief merit—if it be one—is a love of that privacy which no woman can emerge from without regret
> Shelley's life must be written I hope one day to do it myself, but it must not be published now There are too many concerned to speak against him, it is still too sore a subject Your tribute of praise, in a way that cannot do harm, can be introduced into your own life But remember, I pray for omission, for it is not that you will not be too kind, too eager to do me more than justice But I only seek to be forgotten [12]

Trelawny replied, evidently piqued at Mary's refusal to cooperate, especi ally since she had assisted Moore in his life of Byron, and had upheld Medwin Mary on December 15, 1829 replied significantly —a reply which reveals also her attitude toward Medwin with whom the Shelleys had had their troubles·

> Your last letter was not at all kind You are angry with me, but what do you ask, and what do I refuse? You talk of writing Shelley's life, and ask me for materials Shelley's life, as far as the public have to do with it, consisted of few events, and these are publicly known, the private events were sad and tragical How would you relate them? As Hunt has, slurring over the real truth? Wherefore write fiction? and the truth, any part of it, is hardly for the rude cold world to handle. His merits are acknowledged, his virtues,—to bring forward actions which, right or wrong (and that would be a matter of dispute), were in their results tremendous, would be to awaken calumnies and give his enemies a voice . . .
> As to giving Moore materials for Lord Byron's life, I thought—I think—I did right I think I have achieved a great good by it. I wish it to be kept secret—decidedly I am averse to its being published, for it would destroy me to be brought forward in print I commit myself on this point to your generosity I confided the

[12] *Ibid*, page 118

> fact to you as I would anything I did, being my dearest friend, and had no idea that I was to find in you a harsh censor and public denouncer . .
> Did I uphold Medwin? I thought that I had always disliked him I am sure I thought him a great annoyance, and he was always borrowing crowns which he never meant to pay and we could ill spare He was Jane's friend more than any one's
> To be sure, we did not desire a duel, nor a horsewhipping, and Lord Byron and Mrs B . worked hard to promote peace [13]

But in the same year when she was struggling to stop Trelawny there appeared in Paris the Galignani edition of Coleridge's, Keats' and Shelley's poetical works with a seven-page biographical memoir of Shelley, written by Cyrus Redding, and containing only two pages from the glowing preface Mary had written for *Posthumous Poems* of 1824

The author includes in his account of Shelley's elopement certain sentences that reveal what the British public was thinking at this time, this treatment, though inaccurate, but temperate and considerate, could not bring much comfort to Mary.

> Consistent with his own views of marriage and its institutions Shelley paid his addresses to another lady, Miss Godwin, with whom, in July, 1814, he fled, accompanied by Miss Jane Clairmont, her sister-in-law, to Ur in Switzerland, from where, after a few days residence, they suddenly quitted, suspecting they were watched by another lodger, they departed for Paris—on foot and then found that the person to whom they had confided a large trunk of clothes had absconded with them, this hastened their return to England A child was the fruit of this expedition

This sentence must refer to Mary's first child, the girl, born prematurely in February of 1815, who died within a fortnight

> Shortly after they again quitted England, and went to Geneva, Como and Venice In a few months they revisited England, and took up their abode in Bath, from whence Shelley was suddenly called by the unexpected suicide of his wife, who destroyed herself on the 10th of November, 1816 Her fate hung heavy on the mind of her husband, who felt deep self-reproach that he had not selected a female of a higher order of intellect, who could appreciate better the feelings of one constituted as he was. Both were entitled to compassion, and both were sufferers by this unfortunate alliance. Shortly after the death of his first wife Shelley, at the solicitation of her father, married Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, daughter of the celebrated authoress of the "Rights of Women" and went to reside at Great Marlow in Buckingham-

[13] *Ibid*, page 119

> shire That this second hymen was diametrically opposed to his own sentiments will be apparent from the following letter addressed to Sir James Lawrence

Redding reveals that he applied to Mrs Shelley, who gave him assistance on the memoir, as well as errata in the "Prometheus Unbound," changes in the "Adonais," and a suppressed stanza from the "Hellas" She also permitted a Mr R P Davis [not "Pavis," as Professor Jones inaccurately reads the word] to make a portrait of Shelley from a picture in her possession Mary went even further, telling Redding

> I am tempted to offer to write a brief outline of Mr Shelley's life, if Galignani chooses, but then my secret must be kept religiously, and no alterations made It would be very short, and its chief merit, the absence of incorrectness [14]

Her offer, if made, was apparently not well received, for Redding wrote the memoir noted above, correctness was not, as Mary learned, one of its virtues

Biographical remarks such as these, together with Medwin's and Hogg's lives, taken cumulatively, were to give much offense later to Lady Shelley and prompt her in 1859 to have her *Shelley Memorials* volume written.

Hogg's Shelley at Oxford

Thomas Jefferson Hogg, meanwhile, was busily completing his immortal vignettes of the Shelley he had known intimately and shared rooms with in Oxford days When his essays began appearing in the *New Monthly Magazine* for 1832, English readers received a realistic, playfully cynical, yet thoroughly devoted characterization of a Shelley they had never known. While staunchly defending Shelley and himself against their expulsion from Oxford for *The Necessity of Atheism* and their treatment by the dons, and inveighing against the torpid state of education there, Hogg was, nevertheless, in taste, temperament, and morals, like Peacock, Byron, and Trelawny, essentially a Regency man and throughout his life he remained like them essentially of the Regency. These men could never take seriously Shelley's romantic vagaries and his intense proselyting zeal—none of them shared Shelley's whole-souled humanitarianism; though they all admired and profited by his equally whole-souled generosity, and all of them appreciated the greatness of his poetic gifts Hogg realized that a strange and beautiful creature had come into their midst, and to him and to Peacock, to Trelawny and to Byron we owe the most for our knowledge of this Shelley who was flesh and blood and walked on earth—a valuable corrective to the idealized angel of Mary and Lady Shelley

[14] Redding, Cyrus *Fifty Years' Recollections, Literary and Personal, With Observations on Men and Things* London, Skeet, 1858 Volume II, pages 363-366

So captivating was the Shelley of Hogg's portrayal, so destined to immortality, that Mary died in 1851 with the hope that Hogg would be Shelley's biographer, and in 1858 Sir Percy and Lady Shelley approached him to write the official life But little did they know their man. They expected him to canonize Mary and Shelley as Victorian saints—something that, as we shall see, Hogg could never have done "They wanted me to puff," he said, "and I never puff"

So even Sir Timothy could not prevent everyone writing about Shelley Cyrus Redding and Hunt and Hogg had had their say, and Shelley's Eton friend, Thomas Medwin, an unscrupulous adventurer who had already won dubious notoriety for his spicy writings on Byron, now was contemplating a Shelley Lady Blessington assured Crabb Robinson that Byron knew Medwin intended to reproduce his conversations and deliberately "bammed him" Hobhouse, incensed with Medwin's performance, uttered the protest

> I flatter myself that the captain will never show his book again, as for his face, it would be rather satisfactory if he would come here and give some of the relations of the ladies whom he has belied an opportunity of resenting his unmannerly conduct [15]

It was in this same letter that Hobhouse approved of Mary's attempts to stop the publication of "infamous memoirs" about Shelley, one half of the conversations he declared to be forgeries

Mary did not, however, dare to antagonize Medwin, she gave him aid apparently on the Shelley parts of his Byron book, and drew thereby a sharp rebuke from Trelawny

> After what I told you in England of Medwin's goings on you will not be surprised at any folly or villainy he may have committed You used to like and laud him and thought me rash and violent in asserting him to be a coward, a liar, and a scoundrel—nevertheless he has proved himself all these Be the judge—yourself.[16]

One is led to wonder who knew most about Mary's past, Medwin or Trelawny?

Nevertheless, Medwin proceeded to put forth in the *Athenaeum* for 1832 his Shelley memoirs, which appeared in a slender volume the following year As it was largely given over to praise of Shelley and his poetry, and his veiled account of Shelley's treatment of Harriet was favorable to Shelley, in fact was the one Mary and Hunt had already spread in Italy, Mary could not have

[15] *Shelley and Mary* London, Privately Printed, 1882 IV, p 1188
[16] Grylls, R Glynn *Mary Shelley* London, Oxford University Press (1938), pp 217-218

been greatly disturbed. It reiterated what she was determined in every way to substantiate in order to efface or palliate the irregularities of her own union

Brown, the friend of Keats, writing to Charles Richards from France in 1825, merely phrases more emphatically what Medwin and Hunt were to repeat and what thenceforth through the efforts of Mary and the machinations of Lady Shelley was to become the nucleus of the Shelley legend.

> I'll tell you in few words the story of Shelley and Lucy [sic] Westbrook, as I've heard it from L Hunt and another of Shelley's friends,—both accounts precisely alike She was a girl of little or no education, and he, at 18, married her, hoping to mould her mind his own way She however turned all his visionary schemes to air. After a time, her conduct was such, that her infidelities were scarcely the worst part, so that he could not live with her They separated [sic], when he allowed her exactly *one half* of his income This was not enough for *her,* tho' it was for *him,* and he borrowed more & more money for *her,* till he could not longer feed her folly and imprudence One evening she went to her own relation's house in London, where, on account of her bad conduct, the door was shut in her face, and her wants unrelieved,—on which she turned from that very door, and went and drowned herself If Shelley was to blame, why so are you and I No one was to blame but herself, and her unreclaimable disposition and wanton extravagance [17]

Medwin's version of this early detraction of Harriet reads:

> Of the marriage into which he was inveigled at eighteen, I shall say little What could be expected from an union where there was no concord, no sympathy of taste or pursuits, and when every coming day must have revived in dismal contrast the being his soul idolized?
>
> In looking back to his first marriage, it is surprising, not that it should have ended in a separation, but that he should have continued to drag for more than three years the matrimonial chain, every link of which was a protraction of torture That separation, for which there were other and more serious grounds, into which I shall not enter, took place by mutual consent, and, considering himself free, he resolved to go abroad
>
> Her fate was a dreadful misfortune, to him who survived, and her who perished It is impossible to acquit Shelley of all blame in this calamity. From the knowledge of her character, and her unfitness for self-government, he should have kept an eye over her conduct But if he was blameable, her relations were still more so, and, having confided her to their care, he might con-

[17] *Brown, Charles, Some Letters & Miscellanea of* Edited by Maurice Buxton Forman London, Oxford University Press, 1937 Page 53

sider, with many others similarly circumstanced, that his responsibility was at an end [18]

5. MARY CREATES THE SHELLEY LEGEND

Fifteen years after the *Posthumous Poems* had appeared, Sir Timothy relented a little and allowed Mary to issue a collected edition of Shelley's poems with explanatory notes, provided she included no biographical matter She at last had the opportunity if not to recount the facts of his life at least to place her ideal Shelley before the world.

> This is not the time to relate the truth, and I should reject any colouring of the truth No account of these events has ever been given at all approaching reality in their details, either as regards himself or others, nor shall I further allude to them than to remark, that the errors of action, committed by a man as noble and generous as Shelley, may, as far as he only is concerned, be fearlessly avowed, by those who loved him, in the firm conviction, that were they judged impartially, his character would stand in fairer and brighter light than that of any contemporary
> The qualities that struck any one newly introduced to Shelley, were, first, a gentle and cordial goodness that animated his intercourse with warm affection, and helpful sympathy The other, the eagerness and ardour with which he was attached to the cause of human happiness and improvement [1]

She furthermore succeeded in circumventing somewhat Sir Timothy's demands by introducing into the notes as much biographical matter as she dared, and in the glowing light supplied by her noble and generous art of praising. We have here, too, her vivid accounts of the circumstances of Shelley's death and burial, a valuable account complementary to Trelawny's

When she came in the following year 1840 to issue Shelley's prose in *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments* she was most selective and most discreet She suppressed passages and names in the *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* Claire, when permitted to appear at all, was reduced to "C***", and the whole account was altered so as to give the impression that the tour was an unclouded and lovely romance amid the grandeurs of nature, and that all was one sweet and prolonged harmony of song How different was the reality: the sick mule, Shelley's sprained ankle, the dirt and horrors amid the wolfish creatures who kept the inns where they stayed, their lack of money and clothes, their abrupt return—a veritable tragi-comedy of errors

[18] Medwin, Thomas *The Shelley Papers Memoir of Percy Bysshe Shelley* London, 1833, pp 17, 25, 41

[1] Shelley, Mary *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* London, Moxon, 1839 Volume I, pages vii-viii

Mary altered Shelley's letters in these volumes, in the same spirit, with numerous editings, changes, and suppressions, so that by 1850 and 1852 when the poetry and prose volumes were again issued by Edward Moxon, the Shelley legend was well on its way to establishment Her selections from the letters were made to convey chiefly Shelley's rapturous descriptions of nature and of art

6. MARY'S STRUGGLES WITH MEDWIN AND TRELAWNY

A serious cloud, however, appeared in 1847 to cause her great worry and dim the bright picture she had been painting Medwin announced that he was about to publish an enlarged version of his *Memoirs,* but Mary refused to help him in any way He then resorted to blackmail We cannot, because of the omission of dates, be absolutely certain of the sequence of letters that passed between Mary, Medwin, and Hunt over this trying episode, but we can see why Mary penned an agonized protest to Medwin when he announced to her that in his revised edition ready for the press (1847) he was including an account of the Chancery suit She protested that it would wound and injure the living—and especially Shelley's daughter, Ianthe, "who is innocent of all blame and whose peace every friend of Shelley must respect."

> Dear Captain Medwin
>
> Your letter has surprised and pained me—I had no idea that you contemplated the work you mention
>
> As you remark I had said, the time has not yet come to recount the events of my husband's life I have done all that can be done with propriety at present I vindicated the memory of my Shelley and spoke of him as he was—an angel among his fellow mortals—lifted far above this world—a celestial spirit given and taken away, for we were none of us worthy of him—and his works are an immortal testament giving his name to posterity in a way more worthy of him than my feeble pen is capable of doing
>
> In modern society there is no injury so great as dragging private names and private life before the world It is one from which every honourable and upright mind shrinks—and yours does—I am sure, for you have always been careful not to injure others in your writings —But the life of dear Shelley—the account of the Chancery Suit above all, would wound and injure the living—and especially Shelley's daughter who is innocent of all blame and whose peace every friend of Shelley must respect
>
> I must therefore in the most earnest manner deprecate the publication of particulars and circumstances injurious to the living That such is the feeling of Shelley's friends their common silence shews You have been long in Germany and forget what

> our English world is—when you reflect, I am sure you will feel as we all must do—In these publishing, inquisitive, scandal-mongering days, one feels called upon for a double exercise of delicacy, forbearance—and reserve If you were to write to Mrs Hogg on the subject I am sure you will find that her feelings coincide with mine
>
> I had a severe attack of illness this spring—and both before and since I have been very unwell I went to Cowes for a change of air—and am now on a visit to a friend My address in town is 24 Chester Square—for the present—but I hope (though disappointed last autumn) very soon to be on my way to Italy—as a Southern climate is absolutely necessary to my health for some little time I have not been to Horsham for a long long time As to any sort of writing even a short letter is a most painful effort to me—and I do not know when I have written as much as now [1]
>
> I am, dear Cap[n] Medwin
> Yours truly
> M Shelley

Mary did not say that the Chancery records would go far to destroy the vindication of Shelley's memory she had labored so hard to effect in her notes and also the Victorian legend of Shelley and herself that she was assiduously building to gloss over the plain harsh truth of the Petition about the status of affairs during 1815-1818 She could hardly welcome, therefore, seeing in print in 1847 the allegation that Shelley had "unlawfully cohabited with" Mary Medwin replied from Will's Coffee House.

> It pains me much that I could not at once, on receipt of your letter, suppress the Memoirs . The book occupied me eight months and I have taken an expensive journey to bring it out and have now disposed of it for £250 You are, I am sure, too reasonable to ask me to make this great sacrifice If you are desirous and will make me some indemnity for the losses I should sustain, I will give you the Ms stipulating at the same time never to write anything more about Shelley As we are going to press immediately, let me have a reply by return of post [2]

Mary then in desperation believed the time had come for action She was determined not to become again the victim of blackmail, she no longer answered Medwin's letters She wrote, however, to Hunt to ask his son, Thornton, to put pressure on Newby, Medwin's publisher.

[1] Medwin, Thomas *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* A new edition with an introduction and commentary by H Buxton Forman London, Oxford University Press, 1913 Pages xviii-xix

[2] Wise, Thomas J *A Shelley Library* Page 116

> . . . The history is this Last year, more than a year ago, he wrote to me for materials about the Chancery suit I wrote to say that the subject was one, if minutely treated, that would be so painful, among others to Ianthe, that it was altogether improper to dwell upon it A week or two after I had a letter saying that he had obtained details which would be disagreeable to me, that he would suppress the Life if I would pay him; that he had just had an offer of £250, and had been put to expenses, etc I discovered that on the very day he wrote thus, Colburn returned the Ms, positively refusing it, he had had it returned by several booksellers, all declining it unless I approved
> I did not answer his letter, and heard no more till the other day, when came another letter saying that it was on the eve of being published, and talking of its being "slashing", and the hubbub it would make, and saying that money forced him to write, but proposing to let me see it, if I liked, before publication, but saying it was printed Of course, after his previous attempt to extort money, I did not answer his letter, and will certainly never address another line to him A fellow I know to be a villain will never have anything but silence from me . . So many people can be injured Poor Claire, for instance, whose best years were passed in so laudable a struggle for independence Suppose she were mentioned, and, as I said, Ianthe's mother In short, a fellow of this sort goes about dealing wounds with a poisoned dagger, and being beneath injury himself can inflict the most cruel wounds This will add zeal to Thornton, and if he speak to Newby he need not think only of me, but of Claire, Mrs Esdaile [Ianthe] and who knows how many whom the wretch with what he calls his "slashing" may inflict misery upon . . . I hope that Newby will repent, and refrain from publishing so nefarious a production [3]

Finally Medwin wrote to Mary Shelley:

> you cannot suppose that I shall undo the arrangement I have made for the publication which will take place in about a month, or six weeks at latest . .[4]

Her efforts, however, were successful, the publisher yielded and the 1847 edition appeared shorn of the Chancery suit papers and many other passages uncomplimentary to Mary or possibly libelous

In another undated letter written to Jane Williams, who had now made a union with Hogg, Mary stated that Medwin had tried to extort £250 from her for the book and requested the return of Medwin's letters which Mary may have sent to Hogg for legal advice.

[3] *Ibid,* also in *Shelley and Mary,* Volume IV, pages 1238-1239
[4] Wise, *op cit*, page 116

The edition with the Chancery papers and the jibes at Mary never appeared in the lifetime of Mary or that of her son Medwin contemplated issuing the whole again in the year of his death 1868 On November 27, 1869, Trelawny wrote Claire that he expected it in the near future, and though he denounced Medwin as a blackguard, he paid tribute to the genuine devotion of Medwin to Shelley's memory In a burst of bitterness, however, he wrote again to her in May, 1871 " all the men connected with Shelley excepting Hogg and the Smiths . used the poor Poet as their purse "

Medwin's final version was printed from his revised manuscript by H Buxton Forman in 1913 When we read this and compare it with the edition of 1847 we observe what Medwin was up to There are at least eight instances when he snipes at Mary as a woman and as an author.[5]

7 MARY AND CLAIRE

When Trelawny received in 1829 the rebuff from Mary, he wrote Claire complaining of the great change that had come over Mary What he wrote down as hypocrisy, however, was genuine enough Here he was doing Mary an injustice, failing to perceive that under the pressure of circumstances, as well as by natural inclination, she was becoming Victorian He himself had not changed from the plain, rough-spoken Trelawny of Regency days, and as he grew older he became more cynical and disillusioned

> Mary Shelley's jealousy must have sorely vexed Shelley—indeed she was not a suitable companion for the poet—his first wife Harriett must have been more suitable—Mary was the most conventional slave I ever met—she even affected the pious dodge, such was her yearning for society—she was devoid of imagination and Poetry—she felt compunction when she had lost him—she did not understand or appreciate him . As to Mary Shelley, you are welcome to her, she was nothing but the weakest of her sex—she was the Poet's wife and as bad a one as he could have found . [1]

In fact, even before Shelley's death, Mary had shown the squeamishness of the Bluestocking Trelawny relates:

> At sunset the whole population of men, women, and children, took to the water, sporting in it for hours like wild ducks, we occasionally did the same, Shelley especially delighting in the sport. His wife looked grave, and said "It was improper " Shelley protested vehemently against the arbitrary power of the word,

[5] Medwin, Thomas *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* With an Introduction and Commentary by H Buxton Forman London, Oxford University Press, 1913 Pages 121-122, 128-134, 170, 189, 210; 252-253, 322, and 374

[1] *Trelawny, Edward John, Letters of op cit*, page 229, 232

> saying, "Hush Mary, that insidious word has never been echoed by these woods and rocks don't teach it them It was one of the words my fellow serpent whispered into Eve's ear, and when I hear it, I wish I was far away on some lone island, with no other inhabitants than seals, sea-birds, and water-rats" Then turning to his friend, he continued, "At Pisa, Mary said a jacket was not proper, because others did not wear them, and here it's not proper to bathe, because every body does Oh! what shall we do"[2]

Trelawny, therefore, turned to Claire for materials for Shelley's biography The letters and tales of Shelley which she sent him were not destroyed, as Trelawny assured her, when he replied that he "burned as soon as read" They are now widely scattered in the collections of Thomas J Wise, Maurice Buxton Forman, Sir John Shelley-Rolls, and Carl Pforzheimer, though many were earlier given publicity by H Buxton Forman in his *Letters of Edward J Trelawny.*

8 AFTERMATH TRELAWNY PROPOSES TO CLAIRE AND TO MARY

After Trelawny had returned from his bizarre adventures in Greece, he could not forget Shelley nor relax his hold upon Shelley's nearest and dearest, Claire and Mary He had besieged Claire earlier with a volley of fervid love letters imploring her to marry him After her repeated rejections of his suit, he turned with less ardor to Mary to receive an equally resolute refusal Like so many of Shelley's friends, Trelawny in after life labored to possess anything that remained that had been Shelley's Deprived of her person, Trelawny fed upon Claire's long letters telling him all about Shelley's early life, for he was surprisingly ignorant about it He had never heard of Fanny Godwin, and he never knew the number and variety of Shelley's loves—though from all Claire had told him about Harriet, he knew that Lady Shelley was a burning liar in accusing Harriet of prostitution, and made no bones about saying so

Claire and Trelawny kept up their correspondence until her death in her eighty-first year, but Trelawny lived to eighty-nine Much to Trelawny's disgust, Claire had become even more reactionary than Mary, for Claire became a devout Catholic and lived on in seclusion in Florence with her niece, Paola Clairmont, until death brought peace to her intrepid but now much disciplined spirit

There is some doubt among the critics about Trelawny's serious wooing of Mary. The Shelley idolators always maintain that he turned against Mary

[2] Trelawny, Edward John *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron* Boston, Ticknor and Fields, 1858 Pages 173-174

because she refused to marry him, or give him materials for his *Recollections* and his *Records* Massingham, Mary's severest critic, contends, however, that Trelawny's proposal was largely Mary's imagination, but we have in Mary's letters to him coquettish passages, no doubt in answer to his provocations

> If Clare and I were either to die or marry you would be left without a Dulcinea at all, with the exception of the six score new objects for idolatry you may have found among the pretty girls in Florence Take courage, however, I am scarcely a Dulcinea, being your friend and not the Lady of your love, but such as I am, I do not think that I shall either die or marry this year, whatever may happen the next, as it is only spring you have some time before you
>
> You tell me not to marry,—but I will,—any one who will take me out of my present desolate and uncomfortable position Any one,—and with all this do you think that I shall marry? Never,—neither you nor anybody else Mary Shelley shall be written on my tomb,—and why? I cannot tell, except that it is so pretty a name that though I were to preach to myself for years, I never should have the heart to get rid of it
>
> My name will *never* be Trelawny I am not so young as I was when you first knew me, but I am as proud I must have the entire affection, devotion, and, above all, the solicitous protection of any one who would win me You belong to womenkind in general, and Mary Shelley will *never* be yours [1]

Significantly he wrote to her in 1831 "Dear Mary, I love women, and you know it, but my life is not dedicated to them, it is to men I write, and my first three volumes are principally adapted to sailors"

Lady Shelley, whom Mary credits with "the precious instinct of avoiding pecking daws, and of keeping off ill-conditioned wasps", was so incensed with certain of Trelawny's letters, in which he denounced Mary as no fit wife for Shelley, that, according to T J Wise, she destroyed them along with other manuscript materials reflecting against either Mary or Shelley. But not before she had written a long letter to Trelawny reproaching him for his hostility [2]

The letters of Trelawny, however, plainly reveal that he did not understand and could not have appreciated the course Mary was obliged to follow after the death of Shelley. After all, she was only twenty-five when she entered to win for herself and her son a respected place in London society This in reality was always what she had longed for, even during Shelley's lifetime, the tea, the chit-chat with literary notables, the pleasant flirtations with Moore, her more heartless exploitations of John Howard Payne—depriving him of a

[1] *Trelawny, Edward John, Letters of op cit*, pages 160, 163, and 171-172
[2] Grylls, R Glynn *Mary Shelley, op cit*, pp 285-287

Home Sweet Home—as she gazed afar with eyes of longing at Washington Irving Once, however, her coquettishness led her too far, for in spite of her sentimental devotion to Shelley's memory her heart was still susceptible to romantic gallantry. She was, as she confessed, 'a silly goose', and so she suddenly found herself and her unwise and compromising letters in the hands of an unscrupulous Italian gigolo with the unsavory name of Gatteschi, who now contemplated blackmail In desperation over her folly in having written "with an open heart" details of her past life which would destroy her forever if they saw light, she poured out her grief to Claire, who was certainly not at this time "the bane of her existence"

> With my letters in his possession he can destroy me . O happy are you, dear Claire, not to be devoured by humiliating and remorseful thoughts I have only myself to blame—for that there are bad people in the world I always knew, and to treat one of the worst as if he were an angel, was a piece of folly that nothing can excuse—my conduct was so totally devoid of common sense [3]

Similarly, she wrote to Alexander Knox

> Certainly it looks as if they would make no great use of my letters – but who can tell? They were written with an open heart – & contain details with regard [to] my past history, which wd destroy me forever if they saw light – possibly even if left to themselves they never may (Jones, II, p 251)

Sir Percy's college friend, Andrew Knox, came to the rescue, brought the Italian blackmailer before the Paris police, and retrieved Mary's letters and her reputation

Both Claire and Mary, however, had seen enough of romantic freedom never to seriously consider marrying the buccaneer, Trelawny, though Mary urged Claire to console him Their experiences with Byron and Shelley had been so lacerating that they would marry nothing henceforth but a substantial purse plus a single and constant devotion and they never found them They knew the fickle Trelawny too well to take his romantic protestations seriously, for after their refusals, he had time, energy, and ardor for more than one shabby affair with the ladies

But he never forgot Shelley, and he took care shortly before he died that his ashes should rest beside Shelley's in the Protestant burying ground at Rome Lady Shelley, therefore, set up the resting places of Mary and Sir Percy with Mary's mother and Godwin at Bournemouth far away from the grave of that "pardlike Spirit beautiful and swift" who had caused such devastation in the lives of the three young girls, Fanny, Mary, and Claire, when he swept down upon the Godwin family in 1814.

[3] Spencer Catalogue no 113, item 122 [Omitted by Professor Jones]

PART II.

PROBLEMS IN HANDWRITING OF THE SHELLEY CIRCLE

1. A NOTE ON THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF HANDWRITING

Much of the false information composing the Shelley Legend has been accepted because of ignorance of the principles which underlie the identification of handwriting Until one has studied the character of the handwritings of many people, he does not observe the minute personal traits which serve to mark out each script as individualistic

There is one misconception that is very widespread Often a person will say, "I don't believe you can tell my writing I never write twice alike" Many people firmly believe this statement, and it is quite true if they mean that they do not write in exactly the same way on any two occasions Exact coincidence between two signatures, indeed, is one of the recognized marks of a forgery, as it shows that one must have been traced from the other. Such similarity would mean that every letter was the same size, shape, and slant; that each letter was spaced exactly the same distance from the letters which preceded and followed it, and that the proportions of their relations with each other were identical Such precise coincidence is not possible unless the second is traced from the first.

But there are a large number of factors which are alike in the writing of any individual, no matter how irregular the general appearance of his writing may be He may not have a uniform degree of slant, he may write partly vertical and partly with a forward or right-hand slant, but he will maintain the same relative degree of slant between various letters in the same word, or in the same letter combinations

If he makes a "th" with the "t" vertical and the "h" slanted 10 degrees toward the right at one place, and later makes the "t" slanted 5 degrees to the right in this combination, then the "h" will slant 15 degrees to the right, thereby retaining the same slant relationship

No one, however, can maintain that an individual always writes with the same average degree of slant for all the letters. His average slant may be affected by varying mechanical conditions, without thought or intent on his

part His placing the paper at an angle different from the usual, because of the space available for writing, will alter the relation of his average slant to the horizontal and vertical edges of the paper If the writer must stand, write on an inclined surface, or use a pen which requires an uncomfortable or unaccustomed grip, this general slant will also change. But he will still retain the same relative slant between the various pairs of letters unless he has altered it by determined and concentrated effort, and even then, in writing of any length, he will at times unconsciously revert to his old habits

Relative slant is not the sole deciding factor; it is but one of many, nevertheless it is the one most difficult for a forger to discover and to copy successfully.

Another characteristic of an individual's handwriting is the use of letter forms It is obvious that no one will make each and every "a" alike. It is very common for a person to use two or more distinct types for each letter, but there are usually certain places where he employs each type to the exclusion of others One type of "e", for instance, may be used wherever this letter begins a word, but in all other positions a second kind of "e" will be found; or the first type may be used before a very few letters, and the second before all others In order that his script may be legible, the writer must make most of his letters enough like the generally accepted forms so that readers will recognize them He may, nevertheless, develop a purely personal form for a few letters which, even though totally unlike any standard, may still be recognized by the context

As the forms of the letters first engage the attention of a forger they are usually what he is most careful to imitate It is seldom, however, that he studies all of them carefully enough to determine exactly how the writer employs his different forms

It is quite common to find that, where an individual uses some strictly personal variation of a certain letter in combination with several letters only, the forger will be so impressed by this unusual form that he will sprinkle it indiscriminately throughout the forged document, thinking thereby to create the appearance of genuineness Actually he is convicting himself, for if the genuine writing is examined and it shows that this special form is used only to end words having certain letter combinations, whereas the forger employs it liberally in other places as well, this fact constitutes a strong link in the evidence that the writing is forged

Another factor of importance is the relative sizes of the tall letters "l, k, d, b", and those with long stems below the base-line of the other letters "p, g, y", for example, in relation to letters like "a, c, e, o, u" It is the relative size, again, rather than any definite individual size, that counts The individual size may change radically if the person has to fit his words into a limited space, or if he is writing for a special purpose. For example, a line used as a correction or insertion between two other previously written lines

will naturally be made smaller than usual in order to fit this narrow space, likewise, a line written on a greeting card to a person whose eyesight is known to be failing might be written very large But in either example the proportional relationship between the two varieties of letters mentioned would still remain the same, unless deliberately altered by the writer in an attempt to disguise his hand

Capital letters are usually written with more care, and may sometimes be made on a larger scale than would be expected from the sizes of the rest of the letters One reason is that capitals occur at the beginning of sentences where they receive more of the writer's conscious attention than the small letters following when the act of writing becomes more fully automatic Capitals, too, are very much less frequently written and many therefore retain more of the old "copybook" style than small letters which are written many times

Another individual characteristic is the manner in which a writer fills his space One will begin to write at the extreme left edge of the paper, as near to the top as possible, and fill the page to the right edge and to the bottom, without leaving any noticeable margins Another may leave broad margins on all sides of his writing One will crowd his lines as close together as legibility will permit, but another will leave generous spaces between each line One will keep his letters huddled together and so crowd words that there is but little room between them, while another leaves an open park on all sides Spacing, then, is a matter which is largely personal.

Here again, however, it is a matter of relative spacing rather than actual width in fractions of an inch As a writer may vary the actual size of his letters, he will also change the actual width of the spaces, but the two go hand in hand That is, if a writer makes the base of his "n"s regularly an average of 10/100 of an inch wide, and spaces between the words an average of the same distance, then in any instance in which he has reduced the width of his letters in order to crowd his words into a limited space, he will also reduce the spaces between words in a like manner Experience shows, however, that unless the vertical space is also restricted, the writer tends to retain his customary distance from the base-line of one line of writing to the base-lines of the writing above and below, in spite of the horizontal shrinkage.

Often it is easy to understand the reasons for a change in spacing. For example, a writer begins a letter intending to send only a brief note When part way down the page, he discovers that he is not going to be able to finish it on the one page, that there will be only a few lines over Rather than use another sheet of paper, he will then crowd his writing in order to get the whole matter on the one page. Or, again, it may be that the space allotted (as that provided by the government for entering deductions on the income tax blank) is so small that only miniature writing can be used if all the necessary words are to be inserted Under such conditions it is necessary that the

writer give so much attention to the actual writing and condensing that the usual proportions of the letters and spacings are dropped.

Sometimes a writer who ordinarily fills the paper from edge to edge may leave margins around a short poem which he is writing out for a printer to work from, it is probable that in this case his writing will be more carefully done, with unusual attention given to the formation of the letters, in order that the printer can identify them It is even conceivable that under such circumstances the writer may employ a different letter form for any letter which he knows he does not ordinarily write in a legible style Even under such conditions, the proportional sizes of the letters will remain the same, as well as his manner of spacing and connecting them His relative slant between various letter combinations will also remain normal, even though he may change the average angle of slant for the entire writing. One person, for example, normally writes with a slant to the right, but when he wishes to make a good impression on the recipient, or when the writing is of unusual importance, he then slants his writings to the left (backhand) But he actually makes his script more difficult to read, though he cannot be convinced of this fact Yet the relative size, proportions, and slant of his combined letters are still the same regardless of which way his letters slant

This exposition has been provided simply as a brief guide to aid the reader in the following assignment of certain writings to Shelley and others to members of his circle.

2. THE HARVARD SHELLEY NOTEBOOKS

The Harvard College Library was fortunate in securing as gifts from Mr. Edward Silsbee, as explained hereafter in Part V, Chapter 2, two manuscript note books They are MS Eng 258 2 and MS Eng 258 3 The first is a sizeable note book, originally of over 150 pages (some leaves have been torn out) into which Shelley and Mary copied many of Shelley's well-known poems, and there is a single poem, a "Sonnet", page 151, which is in the handwriting of a third person unidentified

At the suggestion of George P Winship and under the sponsorship of Carl H Pforzheimer, this manuscript book was reproduced in facsimile in 1929 with an introduction and notes on the handwriting by George Edward Woodberry. In a number of instances Woodberry's assignments are wrong His errors in identification were for the most part corrected by Helen Darbishire in the *Review of English Studies* for July, 1932. Subsequently Mr Marcel Kessel, unaware of Miss Darbishire's analysis, contributed a similar study to the *Times Literary Supplement* of Saturday, September 5, 1936 Miss Darbishire in the following issue, September 12, then called attention to her prior study

Since, however, there remain some differences of opinion, Mr Waters has drawn up the following list of handwriting identifications as Woodberry, Darbishire, and he assign them

SUMMARY OF HANDWRITING IN HARVARD SHELLEY NOTEBOOK MS ENG 258 2

Page	*Title*	*Woodberry*	*Darbishire*	*Waters*
47	"The Sensitive Plant"	Mrs S	Mrs Shelley	Mrs S
61	"A Vision of the Sea"	Shelley	Shelley	Shelley
69	"To Night"	Mrs S	Shelley	Shelley
71	"An Anacreontic"	Shelley	Shelley	Shelley
76	"An Exhortation"	Shelley	Mrs Shelley	Mrs S
78	"Ode to Heaven"	Shelley	Mrs Shelley	Mrs S
81	"Song"	Mrs S	Shelley	Shelley
84	"A Dream"	Mrs S	Shelley	Shelley
	title line by			Mrs S
87	"Ode to Liberty"	Shelley	Mrs Shelley	Mrs S
90	"The Indian Serenade"	Shelley	Mrs Shelley	Mrs S
91	"Song"	Shelley	Mrs Shelley	Mrs S
92	"To William"	Shelley	Mrs Shelley	Mrs S
100	"To a Sky-Lark"	Shelley	Shelley	Shelley
109	"Hymn to Mercury"	Mrs S	Shelley	Shelley
118	stanza 26, 6¾ lines by			Mrs S
119	stanza 29, all except first two words of line 3 and all of line 4 by			Mrs S
145	"To the Lord Chancellor"	Shelley	Shelley	Shelley
149	"England"	Shelley	Shelley	Shelley
150	"Song"	Shelley	Shelley	Shelley
151	"Sonnet"	? ? ?	Shelley	? ? ?
152	"Sonnet, To the Republic of Benevento"	Shelley	Shelley	Shelley
153	"Ballad"	Mrs S.	Shelley	Shelley
	Woodberry assigns corrections to Shelley			

Mr Waters has also added a few bits of additional information by notations as to a title and a few lines which are not in the same hand as the rest of the poem Otherwise he agrees with Helen Darbishire and Marcel Kessel that Woodberry is wrong in the instances noted above

It would not be surprising if the confusion arising from this erroneous identification of hands in the Harvard Note Book, which has had a wide distribution, was responsible in part for the too ready acceptance of forged Shelley documents by some collectors and dealers, since it might well be felt that anyone who wrote two such different hands, both ascribed to Shelley, as in

"A Vision of the Sea" and "Song" (page 91) could very well have written almost anything that had a remote resemblance to either of these hands

When we add to this confusion the fact that certain letters which have been assigned to Shelley are actually copies made by relatives or friends and some, long discredited though they have been, are still often used as examples of the poet's script, it is remarkable that an even larger quantity of fakes has not come into existence

To return to Note Book I, even a casual comparison of the handwriting of "A Vision of the Sea", which Woodberry properly attributes to Shelley, with that of "To Night" (page 69) wrongly ascribed to Mrs Shelley by the same editor, would seem to be sufficient to convince any one that both were done by the same hand A study of "The Sensitive Plant" (page 47), rightly assigned to Mrs Shelley, should easily satisfy one that the "Ode to Heaven" (page 78), which Woodberry ascribes to Shelley, is penned by the hand that wrote "The Sensitive Plant".

In one instance Woodberry is correct, as far as he goes, and Darbishire and Kessel are in error: "Sonnet" (page 151) is in a handwriting different from that of any other in the volume, Kessel and Darbishire both list it as a sample of Shelley's writing A careful comparison of it with Shelley's script, as exemplified in "A Vision of the Sea", for instance, reveals many differences, or a glance at the adjoining page (152) with the "Sonnet to the Republic of Benevento" for comparison, at once shows what we have emphasized in the preceding chapter, the great differences in relative sizes of various letter combinations and the general, overall impression of slant The frequent use in the "Sonnet" (page 151) of the long tails curving to the left on "g"s and "y"s at the beginning and in the middle of words, where Shelley rarely uses these forms, helps to confirm the other evidences

This Harvard Note Book, containing, with a single exception, the acknowledged autographs of Shelley and Mary, provides, therefore, an indispensable standard for comparison with other alleged Shelley manuscripts It contains many pages of undisputed originals in a note book which was in Claire Clairmont's possession from the time of Shelley's death in 1822 until her death in 1879, when it passed from her niece to Mr. Silsbee who presented it to Harvard on his return from Europe in 1887

Some of these poems are carefully copied, in others the penmanship shows evidences of a haste and a carelessness which give an insight into what may be expected under similar conditions There are places also in a few poems (as on pages 118-119) that Shelley left blank, which Mary later filled in

Miss Darbishire and Mr Kessel evidently assume that all the writing in this book was either Shelley's or Mary's, and since a glance at Mary's script showed them that the "Sonnet" was not her hand, they may, therefore, have carelessly assigned it to Shelley But, as has been mentioned earlier, Mary was not the only person who copied things for Shelley Many of his friends at

various times and places helped with his work and made copies of his poems and letters For example, there is the letter to Hogg, written from Bishopsgate in 1815, reproduced in the Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin no 1, which has long been accepted as an original Shelley letter, but which is actually a copy in the hand of Claire Clairmont Similarly we find listed from the Forman sale in the Brick Row Bookshop *A Catalogue of Percy Bysshe Shelley,* 1922 (page 41, item 241), forty letters from Mary to Claire in the autograph of Claire Claire also made copies of Shelley's letters to her and sent them to Trelawny Mary also made copies of Shelley's letters It is, therefore, necessary to be sure whose handwriting we have before we comment on the authenticity of any document belonging to the members of the Shelley circle

One of the arguments often advanced by proponents of fraudulent papers by way of explanation for the peculiar variations from the standards is that the writer was probably "in a hurry", without knowing precisely what effect haste would actually have on handwriting Haste will make a writer's script less legible, because he is likely to be careless about letter-forms and may run off the final characters as a mere wavy line But haste does not cause him to make different types of letters or peculiar combinations, or to alter the relationship as to comparative height of tall to small letters, or to space between words and between lines in a ratio much different from his more painstaking writing

The understandable desire of dealers and owners of manuscript allegedly written by famous persons to wish to believe their items authentic has resulted in a gradual infiltration of a mass of bogus material into the literary remains of many of our famous men. In a recent periodical issued by a well-known autograph dealer, equipped with more confidence than discretion, we read:

> An *immediate* appraisal of the *genuineness* and approximate value of a manuscript may seem miraculous to a novice who does not realize all of the quick mental processes, some subconscious, involved in a judgment—paper, ink, condition, provenance, the writing itself, and various other factors There is really no magic, but only long years of broad experience, in the development of a virtual "sixth sense" which can deduce with fairly exact approximation during what period an undated manuscript or letter was written, and in what country

We are led to wonder after reading such a claim that forgeries are not more widely accepted "An immediate appraisal of the genuineness" would seem "miraculous", indeed, not only to a novice, but to any one of the leading handwriting experts. It smacks too much of Hitler's military "intuitions".

When one stops to consider the prices, ranging up to $5000 and more, that letters by men like Shelley now bring in the auction market and in the trade, it is not surprising that some really good forgers should devote their time

to producing such documents Such men know about paper and ink, styles of handwriting and pens, postmarks, and other necessary items They are very careful to secure genuine models to work from, either by visits to libraries or by the purchase of facsimile reproductions of documents Their finished work would certainly require far more study than a passing inspection to reveal it as a forgery If you do not think so, consider the large sums expended in this country each year by the bonding companies for forged checks which pass by the inspection of expert tellers and cashiers in our banks, men who have spent years in the study of signatures by the inspection method

In order to detect a good forgery, one must spend days of study It is necessary to collect a number of genuine examples of the writing of the person who is supposed to have written the questioned writing For the best work, these should cover about the same period in the life of the celebrity as when the suspected instrument is alleged to have been written As the quotation mentioned above points out, it is necessary to investigate paper, ink, condition, and writing, but none of these things can be done at one swift glance Study is necessary with microscope and camera, ultra-violet light and photographic enlargements, comparison of the relative proportions of letters, of spacings and of slant Authentic standards are frequently most difficult to secure, since there are so many doubtful documents stored even in our great libraries which pass as genuine but are in reality fakes Without reliable standards, no one can rightly assert that any purported manuscript is authentic

In the second Harvard Note Book is a copy clipped from the *Examiner* for January 9, 1817 of Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" with MS corrections and place and date of composition noted as "Switzerland, June 1816" Then comes "Marianne's Dream" with notation, "Marlowe, May 1817", then "Verses on Receiving a Celandine in a Letter from England", a flower sent him by Peacock, noted as "Switzerland, July 1816", also Shelley's translation of Plato's fragment "Sweet Child, thou star of love and beauty bright", in the "Apologia of Apuleius", and finally "To Constantia"

Some one, possibly Mr Silsbee himself, has added in pencil an item of information he must have derived from Claire about the "Constantia" poem —another proof that all was not well with Mary and Claire at Marlow.

> Written at Marlowe [*sic*] 1817 W'd not let Mary see it Sent it to Oxford Gazette or some Oxford or Coventry paper without his name Maidenhead, Bucks, Berkshire, or Oxford co paper

After an examination of the first Harvard Note Book, it is not hard for anyone to demonstrate that the notation "Poems written in 1816 and 1817 in Shelley's handwriting" on the fly leaf of this second Harvard Note Book is quite wrong The handwriting throughout this volume is not all Shelley's, as Mr. Silsbee and others apparently have believed In this book only the three pages containing "To Constantia" are in his autograph, the others are

in the hand of his wife, Mary If students of Shelley manuscripts fail to distinguish between two hands which are as different as these, where there has been no attempt on the part of the writer to imitate Shelley, they are much more likely to err in the case of a forgery which has been made deliberately to deceive

It is sometimes asserted by persons interested in selling dubious documents that since the item in question is on old paper and bears an old postmark, it is beyond suspicion, "because there were no good forgers before the end of the 19th century" This is false in all respects In 1778 John Matieson, while engaged in counterfeiting bank paper in England, produced such a perfect imitation of the watermark of a certain bank that most of the officials thought he had in some manner procured a supply of their own paper When he was arrested, however, he freely admitted that he had produced the forged watermark by a process of his own, on plain paper, and had never secured any of the private paper or manufactured any paper himself If a watermark could be so skilfully imitated by a forger of that date, it is easy to see that later operators could at least do as well The artificial ageing of paper and of ink is not difficult for a clever faker All these things can be so well done that no mere immediate appraisal would discover anything amiss If you care to go to the trouble of reading "The Gilbert Prize Essay on the Adaptation of Recent Discoveries and Inventions in Science and Art to the Purpose of Practical Banking", by Grenville Sharp, which was published in London in 1854, you will learn that between the years of 1812 and 1818 there were known to be more than 130,000 forged checks, notes and bank-notes circulated in England No one will contend that it is more difficult to imitate a postmark, set up from type, than it is to counterfeit a banknote.

3. SHELLEY'S CHIROGRAPHY AND THAT OF HIS CIRCLE

There are two reasons for choosing for an analysis of Shelley's chirography the first Harvard Shelley Note Book (1) it affords an extensive display of the poet's unquestioned script, much of which has obviously been written hastily, with the author's mind on the subject matter and not on his penmanship, and, (2) it contains also, as we have seen, an abundance of Mary Shelley's handwriting, as well as a sample of a third writer's hand

The poem, "A Vision of the Sea" (pages 61-68), is an excellent model for studying Shelley's characteristics as a penman. The first thing that strikes us is the impression of strong slant to the right which is produced by his long, sloping strokes forming such letters as "f, p, l, t, d, h", with the shorter letters also maintaining the same slant Moreover, as his letters are all narrow in proportion to their height, the up and down strokes lie close together and enhance the general effect of the slant, which is habitually four to five degrees

farther to the right from the vertical than in the forgeries Note also that the margins are straight, except that at the end of a line he sometimes runs a final word downhill in order to crowd it in on that line The height of his letters is quite uniform across the page, without any tendency to taper off at the right end, except for the crowded words mentioned

Next to attract attention are the curved tails of the "y"s and "g"s Study of these two forms shows that almost all of them are confined to final letters of words Two exceptions may be seen on page 67, last two lines, where the "y" in "yet" and the "g" in "refuge" both possess these tails Observe that in each of these instances these letters are not connected with the other letters of the words A similar situation will be found in the "d", this letter having a long, curved final stroke, which curves up over the previous letter like an umbrella The form is also generally used as the final letter of a word, though an occasional one does appear within a word, as in the case of the "d" in "made", the seventh word in the tenth line of page 61

Sometimes he forms an "e" like a script capital, where no capital letter should be used, but he makes it as short as his other short letters This usage is confined to the first letter of a word, and this letter is then not usually joined to the following letter

The use of the long, almost horizontal stroke as a cross mark for his "t" stands out, but careful scrutiny will show that there are more "t"s with only a short cross or none at all, than there are with this noticeable feature

While his "e"s and "l"s are often so narrow as to show no open loop at all, his writing is quite legible and most letters are unmistakable, if we again except those final words that he crowded in at the end of lines

Turning to the "Hymn to Mercury" (pages 109-145), we see that, except for the few lines which have been noted as being in Mary Shelley's hand, what we have observed about the writing of "A Vision of the Sea" applies equally well here Apparently Shelley was using a poor pen, for the ink spread out and filled in the always narrow loops on "l"s and "e"s, and there are many blots

The two Godwin letters, those of February 17 and 21, 1816, are interesting samples of Shelley's chirography, that of the 17th is of special interest since there is a note written by Claire Clairmont at the top of the paper in which she asserts that the date was inserted by Godwin In one letter, then, we have in juxtaposition Shelley's handwriting and that of two others of his circle These two letters both give that same impression of a series of closely drawn lines, all slanting uniformly downward to the left (or upward to the right, if you prefer), and in the long letter of the 21st there is the same straight left margin and the same writing out to the edge of the paper on the right, with an occasional word running downhill where it has been crowded in at the end of a line The narrow "l"s and "e"s, often with closed loops, the tall "t"s, "p"s, "l"s, and "f"s are again present, and the peculiar small-

sized capital "c" appears at the beginning of many words The long cross mark is used on some of the "t"s and others have short crosses or none at all. In other words, these two letters written in 1816 show the same chirography as appears in "A Vision of the Sea', which is dated 1820. This is as it should be The writing of an adult does not change a great deal over a period of years unless his health is affected so as to impair his vigor or control, or unless he changes his mode of life in a manner that compels him to increase (or decrease) the amount of handwriting that he has to do The only logical conclusion is that if Shelley wrote the "Hymn to Mercury" and "A Vision of the Sea" in the Harvard Note Book, then he also wrote these two letters to Godwin

Because of its date, April 9, 1816, consider next the check, now owned by the Yale University Library, drawn by Shelley on Brookes & Co, in favor of Miss Clairmont, for the sum of two pounds It is at once evident that the slant is the same as the previous Shelley style and that the letter forms are his One is struck by the peculiar style of the "9" in the date line, but reference to the "Hymn to Mercury" in the Harvard Note Book shows that on page 112, stanza 9 has a similar long-tailed numeral, and stanza 89 repeats the form, as does 96

The check bears the signature "Percy B Shelley". Here it is appropriate to mention that a man's signature is likely to vary somewhat from his other writing. It is the one combination of letters that most people have to write with the greatest frequency, it often represents to the writer a symbol of his personality, it is the sign by which his friends, his bankers, and his business contacts recognize various kinds of written material as being set down by his authority A study of Shelley material soon shows that many of his letters to his acquaintances were signed with his initials, "S" or, "P B S", or sometimes "P B Shelley". Both the letters to Godwin mentioned earlier are signed with the three initials. Note that the letter forms and the slant in each of these is similar and that, although carelessly written, they are also similar to the signature on this check

Another item of interest is a note, drawn by W. Godwin, payable to P. B Shelley, for the sum of 36 pounds, 10 shillings, 10 pence, dated October 24, 1817, and endorsed across the face: "Accepted, Percy B. Shelley, payable at Messrs. Brookes & Co, 25 Chancery Lane" Here we have Godwin's script, of which we have already seen a sample in the date line of the February 17th letter, and also another Shelley autograph Compare the signature on this note with that on the Yale Library check Note that the slant is alike, the letter forms are similar, the proportions of the tall letters to the short ones is analogous and the spacing is almost identical. It is evident that we have here two examples of his business signature, while on the two Godwin letters is his autograph as he used it on communications to his intimate circle, and yet there is nothing incompatible in the two styles, nothing requires

explanation or apology for any unusual divergence from his normal or known chirography.

Another letter to Godwin, written by Shelley at Geneva, and dated July 17, 1816, displays all of the general and specific characteristics we have already mentioned Note particularly the three covers, or address portions, of these three letters to Godwin Note the slant, the proportions of the various letters, the spacings, and the forms of the characters The uniformity of Shelley's script over this period of six months must be very obvious even to a lay observer This same uniformity of the poet's chirography extended over many years

A letter to Miss Clairmont from Shelley at Pisa, dated December 11, 1821, now owned by the Harvard College Library, is visible proof that this is true He has made some of his capital letters on the address more ornate, particularly the "B"s and "P"s, but the slant, spacing, and relative proportions of the letters remain the same The writing in the body of the letter has the strongest similarity to that of the other writings of Shelley previously introduced

Another document which reveals the same strong style, by now familiar to the reader, is Shelley's letter from Florence to his bankers, Brookes & Co, dated October 30, 1819 The pen apparently was not very good, and the resulting filling-in of the looped letters makes one wonder if it was the same one which Shelley used when he wrote some of the stanzas in the "Hymn to Mercury" in the Harvard Note Book (note especially stanzas 33-35, 52-54, and 80-85) In spite of this, all of the characteristics of the poet's hand, as mentioned above, are plainly visible. No explanations are necessary for divergences from the Shelley norm; the signature, too, compares favorably with those previously examined

By this time, if the reader has followed the explanations and examined the reproductions of the various documents discussed, he should have in his mind a fairly clear picture of the Shelley script, and should, for example, be expert enough to distinguish Shelley's hand from that of his wife. One of the best examples of Mary's writing, since it is long enough to give a very complete picture, is "The Sensitive Plant" in the Harvard Note Book. How does Mary's script differ from her husband's?

First, it differs in the general picture that one gets from comparing a page of her writing with a page of his The impression of the multitude of evenly slanted lines which a page of the poet's script gives, is missing when you see a page of Mary's Analysis will reveal that her "p"s and "l"s and "f"s and "t"s do not project as far above or below the small letters as his do Her slant is not as uniform, and her lower case letters are wider in proportion to their height than his are. She generally makes the final stroke of her "d"s into a complete loop, regardless of whether they are at the end of a word or in the middle of it, or even at the beginning. When she does not

complete this loop, she makes a much longer and more sweeping tail, reaching far over to the left, and often forming a complete roof over the entire word Because of the fact that her long letters are not as long in proportion to her short ones as in Shelley's script, her lines are spaced closer to each other than his are

The letter forms of Shelley's and of Mary's hands have some resemblance, since they learned to write in the same stylistic period. A good example is the word "which" It appears in Mary's hand on page 48, stanza 8, line 1, and the same word, written by Shelley, is found on page 62, line 12 of "A Vision of the Sea". For convenience they are here reproduced together. The similarity, it is true, is striking, but Mary's "w" is more rounded



SHELLEY'S WRITING OF "WHICH"



MARY'S WRITING OF "WHICH"

than Shelley's and his letters are crowded just a little closer together and the upright lines in his script are just a little straighter, so that the over-all effect is that of uniform slant in his, and of slight curves in hers.

Her "r"s are quite broad, with flat tops in most cases, while Shelley's are often a single line and never more than an inverted "v". In words which begin with an "e", lower case, where Shelley employed a capital form simply reduced in size, Mary had a form that resembled a lower case "c" but with an elliptical loop at the top

The poet's "f"s are usually as tall above the tops of the lower letters as they are long beneath their bases, and are often retraced so closely that no loop shows, either above or below the line; when there is a visible loop below the base line of the writing, it is formed by a stroke going downward and then turning to the left and then upward and to the right until it rejoins, or crosses, the other line. This is the reverse of the style customarily used by Mary. Moreover, most of her "f"s have open loops and are shorter over-all

than his There are many other minor differences, but these should be enough to enable a careful observer to distinguish between these two hands

Claire Clairmont wrote a hand which has also been confused with that of Shelley's, although confusion here seems less excusable than with Mary's script Shelley's letter to Godwin of February 17, 1816, has a brief note written by Miss Clairmont in the upper left hand corner

It is at once obvious that her writing lacks the strong, uniform slant that characterizes his, that her "l"s and "p"s and "f"s do not project so far above and below her "a"s, "e"s, "m"s, and other small letters Her "r"s are unlike his, being broader, with a tiny loop on the upper left corner, this letter is not formed as Mary Shelley wrote hers, either, since Claire's not only has the loop mentioned, which Mary's lacks, but also slopes downward to the right, while the top of Mary's "r" is horizontal Claire's "d"s, too, are more often looped like Mary's than they are arched like Shelley's, but she does sometimes use the arch

We trust, then, that this summary presentation of handwriting characteristics will provide some background for later discussions of Shelley's real and forged handwriting

PART III.

MAJOR BYRON AND HIS SHELLEY FORGERIES

"I have seen letters of Shelley's that have been forged so exactly that no man could possibly have detected them who did not possess the originals" LADY SHELLEY, *Talks With Lady Shelley (p. 121)*

1 MAJOR BYRON'S CAREER AS A FORGER

The most scholarly account of "Major" Byron to date may be found in Dr Samuel Chew's valuable volume *Byron in England* We are supplementing it with new facts and special attention to the forger's methods in manufacturing Shelley forgeries

Mary Shelley began to have trouble with the "Major" as a forger of Shelley letters in 1845[1] He was a thoroughly unscrupulous adventurer who styled himself "Major George Gordon Byron", though he was known to the Society of Guardians for the Protection of Trade as "De Gibler" He claimed that he was the son of Lord Byron and a Spanish lady, the fruit of a secret marriage between the noble lord and a Countess de Luna, when Byron was journeying in Spain, and that he was born in Cadiz, in 1810

He is first heard of writing to John Murray III, on July 1, 1843, from Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, here he asserted that "My poor mother belonged to an old noble Spanish family" He then asked Murray for a set of Byron's works and an autograph of the poet In January, 1844, he sailed for England, is supposed to have disclosed his identity to Mrs Leigh, Byron's half sister, Augusta, and was rebuffed; he wrote Murray again, in July, 1844, complaining at the ill-treatment he had suffered from his "relatives"

Early in 1846 we find him writing to various collectors of autographs and friends of Lord Byron or owners of his letters, asking boldly for "copies of such autograph matter as you may be possessed of" to be used in a work

[1] Mary's correspondence with Thomas Hookham, her agent negotiating with "Major" Byron, is reprinted by Frederick L Jones *The Letters of Mary W Shelley*, 1944, II, pp 263ff

dealing with the life of Byron He recommends in one of these letters a method for copying not only materials but handwriting itself "In using a piece of tracing paper you would find it easy enough to produce a facsimile" Occasionally he is even more forceful in his language to these correspondents "I am sure you will try to obtain copies of the letters by all available means—beg them, steal them!" In 1847 he continues his writing campaign, asking for subscriptions to help him in his work of publishing the volume, and in March he is so far advanced in his plans as to be able to enclose a prospectus with each letter he writes to his intended patrons One letter from the Morgan collection we quote to show how he crept up on the blind side of his victims

> Royal Thames Yacht Club
> Greenwich, Feb 4, 1846
>
> Sir,
>
> I will not venture to offer an apology for intruding upon you—permit me to hope that the motive will serve as an excuse Being about publishing a work relating to the late Lord Byron, I should be under great obligations to you, if you would be good enough to supply me with copies of such autograph matter as you may be possessed of You will easily conceive how anxious I must be to obtain information that will throw additional light on the genius and character of the poet, when I tell you (*in confidence*) I am the son of Lord Byron —I should be happy to be permitted to see your *Byronian Collection*
>
> Believe me,
> Sir,
> Your obedient servant,
> George G Byron
>
> Mr George Loddy

The "Major's" first appearance in the public prints was an advertisement which appeared in *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper* for March 11, 1848 A week later another announcement of publication was in the *Athenaeum*

> Uniform with Mr Murray's edition of Lord Byron's Works, published in 17 volumes foolscap 8vo in 1832 On the 31st of March, Part I, price 1 s, to be completed in about 4 volumes, illustrated with numerous plates and Fac-similes, a part to be published monthly, Lord Byron's Inedited Works now first published from his Letters, Journals, and other Manuscripts, in the possession of his Son, George Gordon Byron, Esq

It will be observed not only that the "Major" (who had not yet bestowed on himself that title) claimed to be the son of Byron, but that all of his material was "unpublished" In other periodicals of the day and in his prospectus he went even further, alleging that he had "been permitted to have

the free use of all the Poet's own MSS in the possession of his sister the Hon Mrs Leigh", and that "the most valuable of all his documents have been confided to him by members of the Poet's own family".

These sweeping claims were short-lived indeed, for the very next issue of the *Athenaeum,* March 25, contained an advertisement by W S Orr & Co, publishers, stating that the work previously announced "will not be published by them nor have they any connection with the undertaking" In addition, the same number of this journal had a notice from the family indicating that no permission had been given to George Byron to use any materials, that he had no right to call himself the son of Lord Byron, and that the family solicitor had written to him "stating rather disagreeable views of theirs on the subject"

During the following week, the *Athenaeum* printed a letter from the Byron family lawyers, Jenkyns & Phelps, which stated, among other things, that

> Lord Byron's family never heard of his lordship having any such son,—that the editor is much better known by that excellent institution called "The Society of Guardians for Protection of Trade" than by the family—that he never had any access whatever to any MS in the possession of the poet's sister, the Hon Mrs Leigh—and that no documents have been confided to him by any of the family [2]

This, as it might be supposed it would, ended Major Byron's efforts to publish his life of Byron in England!

Foiled in these endeavors to publish Byron materials which he had in his possession, Major Byron and his young wife entered into the business of selling autograph letters and forging Byron presentation inscriptions in countless volumes Early in the summer of 1848, a young lady (the Major's wife) appeared at the shop of William White, a bookseller in Pall Mall, to sell two letters of Lord Byron. Though White had, in his twenty years in the book-selling business, never before bought an autograph letter, he bought these Not long after, the same lady brought two more, whereupon White questioned her as to where she had obtained the letters She told a story of an elder, invalid sister, who had inherited these autographs from her father, a deceased surgeon, and a former autograph collector This surgeon, she went on to say, had also attended Fletcher, Byron's valet, on his death bed —and he had given her father some of the books which Lord Byron had left.

These visits continued for several months, in the interim, White had acquainted the publisher, John Murray, with the fact that he was purchasing Byron letters. Murray evidenced interest and asked to take them home for examination, but White thought it better not to let Murray see them until

[2] *Athenaeum* no 1066 341 April 1, 1848

the whole lot had been purchased Finally, on April 28, 1849, Murray called on White and bought the 47 Byron autographs for £ 123, 7s , 6d

Then the "Lady Incognita" began bringing Shelley letters to White, and when he had received some of these, he wrote to Moxon, Shelley's publisher, telling of his good fortune Moxon came to White and suggested that the letters should be offered to the Shelley family, he told White also of the box of letters which the Shelleys had left behind them at Marlow, and which the landlord (Maddocks) had sold to collect his arrears in rent, and that many of these "lost letters" had fallen into the hands of a Mr Byron, "who had been troublesome to the family, in endeavoring to extort money for the purpose of suppressing them"

White said he had not heard of this Byron before but was convinced that the letters had not come from the lost box He assured Moxon that they could not possibly have come from this Byron person, for he believed implicity in the young lady's story Mrs Shelley was duly notified of the Shelley letters in White's hands, and Thomas Hookham called on White to discuss their purchase Hookham, however, read to White an extract from Mrs Shelley's letter, "couched in so angry and coarse a tone, as to leave no doubt that she thought my only motive", White says, "was to extort money" This angered him so that he resolutely refused to enter into negotiations with Mary Shelley at that time.

White then tells of "an eminent literary gentleman" (Peacock) who viewed the letters and suggested that a list of them, together with the prices desired, should be drawn up so that they "should be submitted to the Shelley family, with a view of being purchased, and partially suppressed" But Mrs. Shelley, it appears, rejected even his good offices Messrs. Puttick & Simpson, auctioneers, then wrote to White offering to buy these manuscripts for Sir Percy Shelley, but White refused to deal with anyone save the family

After the lady had deluged White with Byron and Shelley letters, she brought also "manuscript books of other descriptions" which White sent to Puttick & Simpson's to be sold On the evening of the day on which the auctioneers sold these books, a Mr William Rowsell, bookseller of Great Queen Street, came to White to ask for the address of Mr Byron, who had received some of these books from Mr Rowsell but had neglected to pay for them This manuscript material, which was in eight or nine volumes, is not identified further

Having now twice heard the name of this Mr Byron, Mr White became suspicious on the next trip the lady made to his shop, he besieged her with questions, and accused her of misrepresentation Then she told White about Major Byron's misfortunes, finally he came to see White, explaining the projected life of his "father", Lord Byron, a portion of which he actually showed White in print He alleged further·

> . . . that he had travelled all over England, France, Italy, and Switzerland, to collect autographs and relics of his father, from persons he knew to possess them,—that he had purchased a great many of the letters of Mr Hodges, of Frankfort, and of Mr Wright, a gentleman connected with the "Quarterly Review" that the Shelley Letters had been collected in various ways, some, he thought, from the Marlow Box, and from various quarters which I cannot remember, as it is now nearly three years since

The Major then gave White a written attestation that everything sold had been genuine, but, as by this time the Byron letters had already found their way to Murray, White had no occasion to mention Major Byron to the publisher

White continues

> The autographs of Mr Hodges, of Frankfort, came on for sale, amongst them some Shelley MSS which I examined, and found the principal document to contain nearly the same as one of my most interesting private letters, excepting that portions were omitted and having no post mark, which mine had, I concluded that Mr Hodges' must be a forgery, and my own the original [3]

The Charles Hodges sale, which took place at Puttick & Simpson's on December 18, 1848, included seven letters and a manuscript, all purportedly by Shelley Five of the letters were bought by Evans; one of these (# 724 in the catalogue of the sale) appeared in Dowden I, 53-54 as a genuine letter Dowden admitted in 1889 that it was a forgery and did not reprint it in his one-volume revision of the *Life*

On the 10th of July, 1849, White put on sale at the same auction house ten letters supposedly by Shelley. Seven were bought in by "B" for White, perhaps to prevent their selling at too low a price (£2, 10s was the highest price paid for any of these letters at this sale)

In August, 1850, Sotheby the auctioneer received two parcels from White to be sold Mary Shelley, who had previously refused to buy White's collection, died on February 1, 1851

These books and Shelley letters (including seven from the 1849 sale, bought in for White) were sold at Sotheby & Wilkinson's on May 12, 1851 In all, there were thirty-five "Shelley" letters and two manuscripts for sale, Lots 1167-1203 in the catalogue, pages 110-115. Of these, the eleven letters (Nos 1193-1203) addressed to Mary were purchased for £57, 15s by Thomas Hookham for Sir Percy Shelley. Twenty-three others, lots 1167-1189, were bought, at prices roughly between one and four pounds each, by Edward Moxon, the publisher, numbers 1190-1192 were secured by other buyers.

[3] *The Calumnies of the "Athenaeum" Journal Exposed.* London, Wm White, 1852, p 12

Browning's Part in the 1852 Volume

In February, 1852, Moxon published his letters (with two more) in a volume entitled *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, With an Introductory Essay by Robert Browning* It is now known that Browning never saw the original manuscripts, but merely copies of them or the proof sheets Browning did not think too highly of the assignment

> I have just done the little thing I told you of—a mere Preface to some new letters of Shelley, not admitting of much workmanship of any kind, if I had it to give But I have put down a few thoughts that presented themselves—one or two, in respect of opinions of your own (I mean, that I was thinking of those opinions while I wrote) However it be done, it is what I was "up to", just now, and will soon be off my mind [4]

Mrs Browning, while not of the same thought, nevertheless repeated Browning's assertion in her letter to John Kenyon

> Robert sends you his Shelley, having a very few copies allowed him to dispose of I think you have Shelley's other letters, of which this volume is the supplement, and you will not be sorry to have Robert's preface thrown in, though he makes very light of it himself [5]

The "Introduction" itself is contained in the first forty-four pages of the 1852 volume, and is dated "Dec 4, 1851" Browning in the essay makes but few references to the letters in the volume

> An opportunity having presented itself for the acquisition of a series of unedited letters by Shelley, all more or less directly supplementary to and illustrative of the collection already published by Mr Moxon, that gentleman has decided on securing them They will prove an acceptable addition to a body of correspondence, the value of which towards a right understanding of its author's purpose and work, may be said to exceed that of any similar contribution exhibiting the worldly relations of a poet whose genius has operated by a different law

Then he goes on to speak abstractly about subjective and objective poetry, about Shelley generally, with no reference to these twenty-five letters until

[4] *Browning, Robert, Letters of* Collected by Thomas J Wise Edited with an introduction and notes by Thurman L Hood New Haven, Yale University Press, 1933 Page 36

[5] *Browning, Elizabeth Barrett, The Letters of* Edited by F G Kenyon New York, Macmillan, 1897 Volume II, pages 52-53

> The responsibility of presenting to the public a biography of Shelley does not, however, lie with me I have only to make it a little easier by arranging these few supplementary letters, with a recognition of the value of the whole collection This value I take to consist in a most truthful conformity of the Correspondence, in its limited degree, with the moral and intellectual character of the writer as displayed in the highest manifestations of his genius

His "arrangement", however, was a purely chronological one, which did not require much editorial acumen, and his comment is, again, very vague

When he once more comments on the letters he writes rather half-heartedly:

> For the rest, these new letters are not offered as presenting any new feature of the poet's character Regarded in themselves, and as the substantive productions of a man, their importance would be slight But they possess interest beyond their limits, in confirming the evidence just dwelt on, of the poetical mood of Shelley being only the intensification of his habitual mood, the same tongue only speaking, for want of the special excitement to sing The very first letter, as one instance for all, strikes the key-note of the predominating sentiment of Shelley throughout his whole life—his sympathy with the oppressed Such sympathy with his kind was evidently developed in him to an extraordinary and even morbid degree, at a period when the general intellectual powers it was impatient to put in motion, were immature or deficient

The portion of the first letter referred to here by Browning, evidently beginning with the words "The ultimate intention of my aim . " ironically enough was actually composed by Shelley, and is not, except for the handwriting, a forgery Shelley had actually written this passage in a letter to Leigh Hunt to which reference had been made in 1832, and the letter had been published in full in 1841 in the *Westminster Review* It is amusing that Browning's first definite reference to a passage in one of the forged letters is to a part which was really written by Shelley. Browning goes on

> There is even such a thing, we come to learn wonderingly in these very letters, as a profound sensibility and adaptitude for art, while the science of the percipient is so little advanced as to admit of his stronger admiration for Guido (and Carlo Dolce!) than for Michael Angelo

Aside from these four paragraphs, and a last half-sentence "these scarcely more important supplementary letters of Shelley", Browning in his Introduction makes no specific reference to these spurious letters In a way this is

fortunate, for remarks based wholly on the letters themselves would have been worthless

Though Browning in Paris had no opportunity to examine the holographs of the letters[6], even had he seen them it is doubtful, unacquainted as he was with the genuine Shelley manuscripts, that he would have noted anything irregular in them After all, the auctioneers, Sotheby & Wilkinson's, had catalogued them as genuine letters, Moxon, the publisher, had accepted them as *bona fide* How, then, could Browning have detected the forgeries when those most familiar with Shelley autographs (even the Shelley family itself) had accepted forgeries as the real things?

Dr Richard Garnett, therefore, in his "Introduction" to a reprint of Browning's essay is altogether too stern in his condemnation of Browning and Moxon

> On the whole, the publication must be said to have done little honour to the critical acumen of Moxon or Browning, and still less to that of Chorley and the other reviewers, who had more time for investigation, and a more ample critical *supellex.*

Reception of the 1852 Volume

The book was reviewed in the various literary journals of the day, including the *Athenaeum* and the *Literary Gazette* for February 21, 1852. The publisher sent a copy of the volume to Mr Tennyson, and Mr Palgrave, son of Sir Francis, recognized a peculiarity in the volume. that one of the letters supposedly addressed to Godwin from Florence was actually drawn, in part, from an article which Sir Francis Palgrave had written for the *Quarterly Review* in 1840

Sir Francis wrote to Moxon, under date of February 23, 1852

> It is a duty I owe both to you and to myself to inform you that in the letters just brought out by you and ascribed to Mr Shelley there is one, viz that dated Florence, which is cribbed from an article by me on that city published in the Q[uarterly] R[eview] (Vol CXL) Even a misprint is ignorantly preserved by the fabricator of the correspondence

A letter dated February 26 and signed "Q" appeared in the *Literary Gazette* for February 28th, giving this information and thus asking " are you sure that the letters with which Mr Moxon has favoured us are genuine?"

[6] Thomas J Wise, in *A Browning Library* London, 1929, page 19, says "In reply to a question I asked him when reprinting his Introductory Essay for the Browning Society in 1888, Browning told me distinctly that he never saw the originals of the supposed Shelley Letters, but wrote his Essay after reading a set of transcripts which had been supplied to him by Moxon "

The following week, March 6th, saw an elaborate article in the *Athenaeum* (no 1271, pages 278-279) called "Literary Forgeries" Here the entire story of the publication of the volume is given White was so chagrined at some of the remarks in this account that he wrote a pamphlet (about March 11) called *The Calumnies of the "Athenaeum" Journal Exposed Mr White's Letter to Mr Murray, on the Subject of the Byron, Shelley, and Keats MSS*, which ran also to a second and corrected edition The answer which the *Athenaeum* gave to White (no 1273, pages 325-326, March 20, 1852) was a strong one, and suggested that White was definitely at fault when he had not mentioned the name of Major Byron to either Murray or Moxon before he allowed these letters to be sold to them

The *Literary Gazette* (March 6, 1853) remarked that

> The letters of Byron, Shelley and Keats were found to agree more with each other than with the undoubted letters of the respective writers, which testify of their forgery

In all, it was calculated that about a hundred of these fictitious letters had found their way in this manner into the market at prices of two to four guineas each (and to this number we must add those which Hookham bought directly from Byron in 1845-6). The Major forged, be it remembered, not only Shelley letters, but also Byron and Keats letters!

Definite proof that the letters were not genuine came only after Murray compared the postmarks of the same cities, month, and year of the Shelley letters with his undoubted Byron originals. When this proof was forthcoming, the book was suppressed, the forged manuscripts were returned to White, who reimbursed Moxon and presented them, on March 4, 1853, to the British Museum, where they now form Additional MS 19377.

The Composition of the Forged Letters

We may now profitably examine the contents of *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley* as published in 1852 by Moxon There were, in all, twenty-five letters in this volume, arranged chronologically, and ranging in date from February 22, 1811 to August 26, 1821.

Of these letters, only five have previously been traced to their sources in books and periodicals We have been able to locate parts or wholes of fourteen more, leaving six still to be found. In the course, however, of locating these fourteen, we have been able to disclose Major Byron's various clever ways of utilizing these source materials as well as the strange places he went to for them

Letter I, "To the Editor of the Statesman, London", is drawn in part from a genuine Shelley letter to Leigh Hunt, the portions copied appeared

in the *Westminster Review* for April, 1841, whence the forger probably derived his passages

Letter II, "To J H Graham, Esq", has a full paragraph in the middle copied from *Janus, or The Edinburgh Literary Almanack,* 1826 (as Sara Coleridge pointed out in the *Athenaeum,* no 1273 325-326 March 20, 1852), pages 73-74

Letter IV, "My dear Sir", is drawn from an article by John Lawrence in the *Monthly Magazine, or British Register* 48 491-492 January 1, 1820 (as discovered by "F H" in *Nation* (New York) 48·138 February 14, 1889) Only the postscript is original with the forger

Letter V, "To Sir James Lawrence", is a genuine Shelley letter which had appeared in the prefatory memoir written by Cyrus Redding to the Galignani edition of Shelley's *Poems,* Paris, 1829 The forger probably took his copy from this text

Letter VI, "To James Lawrence, Esq", is drawn (except for first sentence) from a letter signed 'Iota' in *Monthly Magazine* 58 416 December 1, 1824

Letter VII, "To J H Graham, Esq", had its last two sentences paraphrased from *Essays, Letters from Abroad* edited by Mrs Shelley, II, 55 The place alone is taken from Shelley's letter to Peacock, *ibid*, page 49

Letter VIII, "To P W Longdill, Esq", has its second sentence paraphrased and copied from *Essays, Letters from Abroad . . .*, volume II, page 55, and four sentences at the end paraphrased and copied from the same page, and from pages 58-59

Letter IX, "To William Godwin, Esq", has its place drawn from *Essays, Letters from Abroad,* II, page 61, though the date differs by two days

Letter XII, "To P W Longdill, Esq", is taken (except for the first four words and the last half of the first sentence) in entirety from an article entitled "Fourteen Reasons Why No Man Ought to be Held Amenable to Any English Tribunal for Publishing his Theological Opinions", signed "A Christian", in *Monthly Magazine* 49 29-30 February 1, 1820.

Letter XIII, "To J H Graham, Esq", has the entire first paragraph lifted from John Lawrence, *Monthly Magazine* 46 111 September 1, 1818

Letter XIV, "To J H Graham, Esq", has the last six paragraphs taken from John Lawrence in *Monthly Magazine* 46 112 September 1, 1818 (as noted in *Nation* (New York) 48.138 February 14, 1889).

Letter XV, "To William Godwin, Esq", taken *in toto* from P W. Longdill's letter to Shelley, August 5, 1817, printed in the *Shelley Correspondence in the Bodleian Library,* edited by R. H. Hill, pages 12-13, letter XVII in that volume, listed as hitherto unpublished In abridged form, this letter appeared earlier in *Shelley Memorials From Authentic Sources,* edited by Lady Shelley, 1859, pages 85-86 The forger changed the date to February 2, 1817, and made editorial changes What his immediate source for this letter was is

still not determined, the letter appears to have been in the family's possession since 1817

Letter XVII, "To J H Graham, Esq", has several sources middle part paraphrased or copied directly from *Essays, Letters from Abroad* .. II, 136, 141, 144 Second paragraph (all but the first sentence) taken from two sources *Monthly Magazine* 50 324-325 November 1, 1820 (an original discovery), and *Monthly Magazine* 46 214 October 1, 1818 (as noted in *Nation* (New York) 48 138 February 14, 1889) The last sentence appears original with the forger

Letter XVIII, "To William Godwin, Esq", has two sources first four sentences of second paragraph from *Essay, Letters from Abroad* . II, page 136 One sentence is original with the forger (that on the remarkable ways of Byron), plus five sentences drawn from *Monthly Magazine* 48 293 November 1, 1819, the "Letter of a Recent Traveller in Italy", dated Verona, June 5, 1819 Part of the conclusion is taken from *Essays, Letters from Abroad* ... II, page 136

Letter XIX, "To J H Graham, Esq.", the first three and one-half sentences are drawn from *Essays, Letters from Abroad* . II, page 183, the last half of sentence four from *Essays* . . . II, page 196 The rest of the letter (except the last three words) is taken verbatim from *Westminster Review,* volume 35, April, 1841, the article entitled "Modern Italian Painters"

Letter XX, "To G D. Marlow, Esq", has the second and third sentences drawn from *Essays* . . . II, pages 220-221 One sentence, "I have gathered my poetical coals at this poetical Newcastle" is paraphrased from *Essays* .. II, page 344 Another sentence, beginning "The original sources of poetry . . ." is from *Monthly Magazine* 51·231 April 1, 1821, "News from Parnassus, No. IV, Amarynthus, the Nympholept".

Letter XXI, "To William Godwin, Esq.", has the first two sentences paraphrased or copied from *Essays* . . . II, pages 226-227. Next three sentences are from *Quarterly Review* 66 327-328 September, 1840, next three sentences from same source, page 327, next five sentences from page 328 of the same; one original sentence, next five sentences from pages 315-319 of the same, one original sentence (Palgrave himself wrote Moxon about this source, as quoted above). One sentence, "Have the Quarterly men . . ." is paraphrased from *Essays* . . . II, page 229

Letter XXIII, "To John Keats", supposedly a genuine letter The text is drawn from that which appeared in *British Quarterly Review* 8·337-338 November, 1848; it differs from Ingpen and *Westminster Review* versions in a number of respects, in paragraphing, punctuation, and wording.

Letter XXIV, "To Horace Smith, Esq", has part of first sentence perhaps drawn from *Essays* .. II, page 325 Ending seems paraphrased from *Essays* . II, page 317 ("I have only two minutes to write") and page 306 ("The post only goes once a week").

XXV, "To Horace Smith, Esq", has first and third sentences from *Essays* . II, pages 325 and 327 Second and fourth sentences are from *Essays* . . II, pages 332-333

In recapitulation, then, of the twenty-five letters in the volume, only two are supposed to be genuine (that is, to be based on Shelley originals) the fifth, addressed to James Lawrence, and the twenty-third, directed to John Keats Four of the remainder are taken in entirety from a source other than Shelley letters IV, VI, XII, and XV, three of these from the *Monthly Magazine* and the other from a letter actually written by Longdill to Shelley Of the other nineteen, partial sources, other than Shelley, have been found for eight letters II, XIII, XIV, XVII, XIX, XX, and XXI From Shelley's own letters, parts of five letters have been forged I, VII, VIII, XXIV, and XXV

Occasionally the forger combines material from Shelley with non-Shelleyan materials, as in Letters XVII, XVIII, XIX, XX, and XXI In the last-mentioned letter the forger paraphrases the first two sentences from Shelley, then draws upon Palgrave's article in the *Quarterly Review* for 1840, then concludes with another paraphrase from Shelley

We can see, then, what were some of Major Byron's methods of compilation First, in a few instances, the stealing of whole or authentic letters is to be noted, as in Letters V and XXIII Second, there are carefully constructed mosaics, drawn principally from Shelley as found in *Essays, Letters from Abroad* volume II, published in 1840, and hence easily available to the forger Third, there are mosaics made up from various periodicals, chiefly the *Monthly Magazine,* but also from the *Quarterly Review* and the *Westminster Review* Fourth, there are whole letters from other correspondents foisted on Shelley, as in Letters IV, VI, XII, and XV

Dates on which and places from which the letters were written, in order to make them appear authentic, were derived largely from those to be found in *Essays, Letters from Abroad,* etc It was pointed out at the time in the *Athenaeum* (no 1271, pages 278-279, March 6, 1852) that the postmarks on these letters were also forged·

> The first step taken after this was, to compare the postmarks with Byron's letters to Mr Murray posted from the same cities in the same month and year, and to the same city—London Here, they failed,—and in this way Where "Ravenna" on a genuine letter was in small sharp type—in the Shelley letter it was in a large uncertain type,—and in the letters from Venice the postmark of the City of Palaces was stamped in an *Italic,* and not as in the Shelley specimens in a Roman letter!

In another respect, too, the forger was not so clever, two names that recur in Shelley biography are "Graham" and "Marlow", the first being

"Edward Fergus Graham" and the second the name of the place where Shelley stayed for part of 1817 Evidently Major Byron was unaware of Graham's initials because frequently in Shelley documents he is referred to simply as Graham, so the Major had the audacity to supply from his imagination the initials "J H" instead of the correct ones "E F" The *Athenaeum* remarks·

> the same "John Hezekiah Graham", an imaginary friend of Shelley, confounded with Shelley's friend Mr Edward Graham, to whose lodgings some of the Hezekiah letters are addressed Mr Edward Graham is still alive,—and has at once repudiated all knowledge of the scriptural Hezekiah—and of the letters [7]

The place name "Marlow" is transformed by the forger into "G S Marlow" in Letter XX, a worthy Shelley never heard of The forger was driven to the necessity of addressing these letters to correspondents other than those to whom the original letters were directed But even his fertile imagination ran out of names, for Letter IV is addressed simply "My dear Sir", and Letter XVI, "My dear Madam"

Although we have found no sources for six of these letters, no doubt in the course of time they will be run to earth, now that we have made clear Major Byron's practice in these other fabrications His original contributions consist largely of transitional expressions between stolen passages, and the omission of references in these passages to Christianity (done twice in Letter XII, and again in Letters VI and XIX) On the other hand, in some of the letters, the expressions in favor of a creative deity and nature are so marked that they caught the eye of the reviewer of *Tait's Magazine* (2nd series, volume 19, page 252, 1852), who hailed them as evidence that Shelley was not so much of an atheist as he was charged with being.

What Hogg Thought

In the "Preface" to his two volume *Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley,* Thomas Jefferson Hogg promised to take up the matter of the forgeries in the latter part of his work, something which the fiasco with Lady Shelley prevented his doing.

> The forgery of his correspondence, a curious matter, of which hereafter, was an extensive and a profitable speculation

What Hogg knew about these forgeries must remain a matter of conjecture; we know only that Mary mentions Hogg once in all her correspondence with Hookham, and this does not indicate that she has taken "Jefferson" into her confidence

[7] *Athenaeum* no 1273 326, March 20, 1852

The forgeries were surely, as Hogg indicates, extensive, and they might also be termed profitable White gives two sets of prices for the Shelley letters he bought from Byron, he claims that he paid "2£ to 3£ each—and for one or two more than that sum".[8] Something over a month later, White made at least a general statement of the matter in a letter to John Murray denying the *Athenaeum's* charge in their second article that White

> might only have given 10/6 each for the Byron letters; I beg to inform the writer that I gave from 20/ to 35/ each according to the length of them—and much more for many of the Shelley

In the 1851 auction sale, eleven of the forged letters to Mary sold to Hookham for Sir Percy for a total of £57, 15s, or an average of a little more than five pounds apiece. Again, in the July 10, 1849 sale, ten of Shelley's letters (forgeries) sold at about 2£, 5s apiece, and White was forced to buy in seven of these letters to prevent a loss on his investment. Moxon paid, as we have before said, between one and four pounds each (actually between £1, 16s. and £4, 14s, 6d) for letters no one of which was to Mary!

Subtracting the auctioneer's charge and White's profit, it would seem that the forger received, at the very least, about a pound a piece for the shorter letters—and much more for some of the others, if White is to be believed

We see that in *Letters about Shelley* (pages 64-65) Dowden and Garnett have one brief discussion about Shelley's handwriting, real and forged, but from the casual remarks we are led to conclude that neither scholar was an authority on or made a close study of the genuine handwriting of Shelley Furthermore, for the most part, Dowden was not permitted to see manuscript materials, but transcripts, abbreviated versions, or printed copies of letters which Lady Shelley prepared for him Therefore it is highly probable that Lady Shelley never came forth with the significant originals, which she had promised year after year would absolve Shelley and Mary from all blame in the Harriet affair, because she had no such originals, but only the forgeries perpetrated by Major Byron If she had these originals, where are they? We know that Dowden himself was so deceived by a letter which came from the pen of Major Byron, that he included it in his life of Shelley When it was pointed out that the letter[9] was derived from one of Lord Bolingbroke's to Dr Swift (Warburton's edition of Pope, 1757, volume IX, Letter VIII, page 32), Dowden replied·

> I am particularly obliged to you for pointing out to me the identity between part of the supposed letter of Shelley to Graham and a passage from Bolingbroke, for it has set me upon a fresh examination into the matter, and my conclusion is that I have

[8] *Literary Gazette*, March 6, 1852
[9] Dowden's *Life*, 1886, I p 53

> been imposed upon by a clever forgery The letter, which is now before me, belongs to Sir Percy Shelley's collection, but it was obtained by purchase I could not easily pronounce it a forgery on the ground of handwriting without a more extended comparison than I am at present able to make Shelley's handwriting is imitated skilfully, but not more skilfully than in letters certainly forged which I have had in my hands There is no postmark, but in some of the forgeries postmarks are well imitated I shall henceforth set down the letter as one of those forgeries against which Shelley's biographer had to be constantly on his guard [10]

How many other forgeries have been included by Dowden in his official biography, in spite of his having been "on his guard", one can only guess.

It seems evident, therefore, that Shelley biography cannot be put upon a sound basis until institutions and private owners of all these Byron and Shelley forgeries make them available for scientific examination by a handwriting expert Taken alone by themselves, they are, as Richard Monckton Milnes, Lord Houghton, said, "a monument of criminal ingenuity" (*Athenaeum* no 1277 431 April 17, 1852), they are so expertly done as to deceive, as they have always done (witness Lady Shelley and Sir Percy Shelley, Hookham, Murray, Moxon, Milnes, Dowden, *et al*) and, what is worse, they have crept back into Shelley biography as genuine, as they have been scattered down through the years, subsequently tinkered with to make them more acceptable as genuine Studied, however, with Shelley originals at hand for close comparison, one does not need more than patience and the "seeing eye" to sort out the Major Byron fakes from the originals One wonders, therefore, if the letters which the Shelley family bought were checked in any way other than to see if they were copies of "originals" which the family already held—handed from Major Byron to Hookham to Mary—and that if no "originals" were thus discovered, the letters were, willy-nilly, accepted as genuine and placed in the canon of Shelley biography But, of course, some dealers in such traffic, even today, are not any more willing to subject their letters to scientific examination by a hand-writing expert than was White when Murray asked to be allowed to take the Byron letters home to compare them with his known genuine letters.

Mary Shelley and the Forger

We have mentioned the habit which Major Byron had of writing letters to those persons who might be presumed to possess original letters of Shelley and Byron, generally with a view toward copying content, style, and

[10] *Athenaeum*, no 3194 51, January 12, 1889

even handwriting He had begun this letterwriting activity as early as 1843, when, from Pennsylvania, he asked John Murray III for Byron's works and —we know now for purposes of imitating or forging—an autograph of the poet

In each of these letters the Major mentions his supposed relation to Lord Byron and then speaks of his projected volume

> Though the work, of which I have the honor to enclose a prospectus, need not the aid of a subscription to insure its circulation, yet, I am indirectly compelled to adopt this means of publishing, in consequence of my unwillingness to cede a publisher the lion's share [11]

To another correspondent he writes·

> Copies of other letters you are good enough to produce for me will form a valuable addition, and I shall feel much pleasure to return your printed copies at a future period

His success in these endeavours must have been phenomenal, for shortly afterwards he says

> I have delayed until this hour acknowledging the receipt of your letter of the 23rd instant, containing the original letter, of which you had the goodness to send me a copy, and today I owe you more thanks for the "vista" you have opened before me

It was, too, perhaps about this time that the Major expanded his activities to include Shelley letters, for Medwin reveals

> It [Shelley's] was a very bold and free and peculiar hand, and it surprizes me that the late forgeries of his letters published by Mr Moxon should have been undetected—a Mr George Gordon Byron wrote to me some years ago telling me that he had many letters of Shelley's and invited me to go down to Greenwich where he was residing in order to peruse them I have seen no announcement of their publication [12]

Apparently Medwin does not connect the Major with the forged Shelley letters of 1852 The Major was in Greenwich during most of 1846, and it is likely that the approach to Medwin was made in that year. Forman is right in saying

[11] Letter of March 3, 1847 These and other letters of the Major are included through the kindness of the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York

[12] Medwin, Thomas *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, a new edition . with introduction and commentary by H Buxton Forman London, Oxford University Press, 1913 Pages 373-374

> It is strange that Medwin did not put two and two together and suggest that his correspondent was, as now generally believed, the forger of the Moxon spurious letters Had he accepted the invitation, he might have discovered and exposed the fraud before Browning wrote his introduction to the suppressed book of 1852 [13]

There is always the chance, however, that Medwin would have proved no better versed in genuine Shelley handwriting than Moxon. Very possibly the forger might have suggested—had Medwin made the visit—that Medwin show his Shelley papers to the forger on a return visit, which then would have been another source for materials and models for the inevitable handwriting-copying

It was about that time, too, that the forger made contact with the Shelley family through Hookham The recent publication of Mary Shelley's letters[14] includes eleven letters which passed from Mary to Thomas Hookham on the subject of Shelley materials (letters and poems) in the hands of George Byron

Byron (known at first only as "B") called on Hookham, apparently for the first time, before October 28, 1845, for Mary wrote to Hookham on that day to inquire innocently "He did not call today. Does he want the letters bought of him—or what?" Hookham's answer, which we have only in Mary's response to it, must have indicated that "B" had shown some Shelley letters to Hookham, as well as some of Mary's own letters which "B" was prepared to *give* to her Mary had expected him to call on her!

Hookham had suggested the name of Peacock to "B"—and Mary promptly wrote to Peacock Having been told that the letters were for sale, Mary became impatient about getting them Still she did not know who "the man" "B" was, but she cared little so long as there was a promise of letters

Mary's first thought was that Hookham must take possession "of the letters at once" Though she averred that the letters were her property and that they had been stolen, she admitted also that "he wants to sell them and to get money" £20 is the first price Mary proposed to pay for all the letters Then, though Mary warned, "We must not shew any great desire", she used the expression "at once" fully four times in this one letter. Hookham had seen some letters, for Mary wrote, "As those he shewed you are only a small portion of those lost, has he any more?"

After Letters 621 and 622, it seems that next in order must come Letter 628, [undated] for the reason that in this long communication Mary repeats

[13] *Ibid*

[14] *The Letters of Mary W Shelley* Collected and Edited by Frederick L Jones, Norman, Oklahoma University of Oklahoma Press, 1944 These letters are in Volume II, and are numbered 621 through 628, and 651 through 653

her thought that "£10 or £20 would suffice" and her disbelief that "B" will "give me *my* letters" (both ideas also in Letter 622) Further, it is clear that in Letter 628 she still has not received information as to exactly how many letters Hookham saw, nor has she ascertained more of the "man's" name than his initial

A careful study of the original manuscripts of all eleven letters, which are in the Henry W and Albert A Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, reveals that a serious error has been made in the printing of three letters[15] So grave is the mistake, indeed, that it will be necessary, before discussing the letters or putting them in their proper chronological order, to reprint each of these three letters The letter now numbered 628 should follow 621 and 622, here is 628:

> Dear Sir
>
> The man has not come – & now some days are gone by – he will doubtless shew himself again It may be too much to call him a rogue – but he is a fellow desirous of making money in a disreputable way – He wont at all care for my politeness – he will only think of what he can get – & how to augment his demand –
>
> Whether I am at home when he calls (as my hours for exercise vary) is very doubtful – but if you see him, it were much better if *you* could settle the matter You know what letters or letter he has – & how improper as well as disagreeable it would be for me to haggle about the price to be given for them improper & indiscreet in the highest degree – A third person can do this so much better – & this he felt, perhaps, when he called on you – The thing would be for a third party to bring him to terms If he calls again it were best to say that the letters were stolen & that I shall be very glad to possess myself of them & any trouble & expense he had been at I should be very glad to remunerate If he talk of seeing me, make him understand if to give me the letters & to be sure they come into my hands it would be well – but that *I* could not enter into question of price – & that he had better treat it with you or Mr Peacock He is a low fellow obviously – but the *papers were stolen & are mine* by *law His not giving his name shews his designs to be bad & the means he would take unscrupulous*—

[15] The three letters in question, Letters 623, 624, and 628 are composed of two 4-page folders each But the folders have been mis-mated by Professor Jones in his edition, so that the first folder of Letter 623, ending with the words "a dozen wd" (page 266) is matched with what should have been the second folder of Letter 624 Likewise the last folder of Letter 624, beginning "*mine* by *law*" (Page 267) should have been printed as the end of Letter 628 (page 270) Finally, the ending of Letter 628, beginning with the word "enough" (page 270) should have been attached to the first folder of Letter 623 (the editor omitted the word "be" plainly visible in the manuscript, the correct and complete sentence should read " for the rest a pound a dozen wd be enough") The texts of these three letters, then, are certainly not clear or correct

My seeing him would put me in a position at once improper & useless – If I see him I shall adopt the conduct you point out – but conduct & manner of mine will avail nothing against a man of this sort trying to make money

I am sorry to trouble you so much – but if he comes again it would be as well to lead him to think that he had better arrange the barter of the affair with you or Peacock However, if you see him again in talking he may shew his designs further, & what his pecuniary hopes are Whatever they are he had better be let understand that he will get something – but nothing immense –

He *can* make no use of the papers in this country – I should think £10 or £20 would suffice – I hope so – for there is nothing so mortifying as to have to give money to a rogue – when there are so many honest persons one is pining to benefit

Very truly ys
M Shelley

He said he would give me *my* letters He will not – or if he did, it would be because he thinks these the least valuable portion & giving him besides a right to ask more for the rest Mine by themselves I dont think I wd accept I must not *treat* with such a fellow *alone* altogether I shrink from him –

Mary's impatience has steadily mounted, for "The man has not come". Apparently "B" wanted to see Mary, told Hookham, and Hookham in turn cautioned Mary how she should act if "the man" visited her "I shall adopt the conduct you point out", but she shrinks from such a meeting. It would be improper, "indiscreet in the highest degree". Bargaining for her would be difficult, it might better be done by Hookham.

But then she wavers about meeting "the man" face to face· "If to give me the letters and to be sure they come into my hands it would be well". The next moment Mary is sure she could not "enter into question of price"

That "B" has not given his name is a source of annoyance to Mary She then thinks of cutting her first offer in half, but thinks better of it "£10 or £20" "B" has become "a rogue".

Letter 627 must come next, for here Mary is still unacquainted with the forger's name She is not altogether discouraged, for she has, in the interim, received a letter from "B", who had not been satisfied until he applied directly to Mary. She still did not want to meet him, but gave Hookham the text of a note she wished him to write, arranging for a meeting of Hookham and "B" at Hookham's office for the following Monday (November 10 ?). Mary proposed to be there at one o'clock, no doubt to give Hookham the money and the instructions for his interview with the man "B" was to be there at five, and would meet Hookham only—unless perhaps Mary was brave enough to meet him with Hookham at her side

In this letter Mary repeats her conclusion that the man is a rascal. The air of business-like finality about her note came, apparently, from her feeling that this meeting would gain for her, as she wrote, "*all* the letters you had when you called upon me [Hookham] before" It will be noted that still "the man" has been to see Hookham but once—before October 28—and, whetted by curiosity, Mary has been first awaiting his possible visit to her (Letter 628) and now virtually contracts through Hookham to buy all the letters from him "you will most probably receive the assistance you require". Perhaps, too, it was only for a "loan" to help him on his book that "B" asked—and now this help was to be forthcoming

Very likely "B" was there at the time appointed, for he sent (mailed) a letter receipt to Hookham, dated Nov 12, 1845,[16] insisting that "I cannot receive that sum otherwise than as a loan to be repaid in the course of twelve months Please to give this assurance to Mrs Shelley"

It is interesting to note at this juncture that Mary nowhere refers to this receipt, or to the suggestion that the money is to be viewed as a loan, and not as an exchange for letters in "B"s possession One wonders whether Hookham did not tell Mary about this—which seems unlikely, for what motive would Hookham have?—or whether there is here a gap in the correspondence It is curious, too, that Hookham retained this receipt

The next letter in the series should probably be that now printed as Letter 623

The poems you talk of are mere copies of course— Friday

Dear Sir

You are very good to take all this trouble – the Rascal's notes make me sick

I went to see Peacock today – & meant to see you tomorrow, but I fear I shall not be able – so I write & being very tired will just succin[c]tly say what I can on the subject.

1 – Peacock says I did wrong to give any money – I am sure I did so in offering so much so readily I am poorer than any one knows or this rogue cd be made believe – not that he would care, so he got the money, whether I could well or ill afford it – but fancying me richer than I am makes him exhorbitant

Peacock says the fellow has brought himself within the law – he had better take care – he does not live at Greenwich certainly (for *whatever he says must be false* of that be sure) I wish he could be followed

However to the point of course I would give £5 for the letters – but to offer this would be unavailing – & besides I fear he

[16] A discussion of the handwriting of this note will be found in Part III(b)

has *many more* – to offer so much per letter (one pound for instance) wd be the only way – but this I would only give for *Shelley's own* – for the rest a pound a dozen wd be enough

Still we must not offer – He must be told that I demand all the letters as mine – or say what you will – I wish him to be made understand that I consider that he is playing the rogue & that he will make nothing by me – Thus he may be brought to the terms I have mentioned I cannot afford to give more or I might be fool enough to do it – but I *cannot*

Have an eye to any auctions of autographs – will you be so good

One pound per letter of Shelley's own
for all others half a crown –

but do not *offer* this I entreat Let him bully & threaten a little more, & feel that I will do nothing & then he may avail himself of what I will do The more letters he writes us & the more blackguard & threatening they are, the better

I dont believe he has the impudence to take the name of Byron generally – tho' a swindlers name is only an alias of course

Ever ys
M. Shelley

A shift in Mary's feelings is immediately noticeable, now there is disgust in. "the Rascal's notes make me sick". She has received too many "blackguard and threatening" letters from Byron, and her former eager interest has cooled considerably.

"Peacock says I did wrong to give any money"—does this refer to the £30 which Byron received on Nov. 12, 1845? If so, this letter must be dated later, not, as Jones conjectures, October 31.

When Mary writes "he does not live at Greenwich certainly", she probably refers to the address he has given in his notes to her[17] Mary has had time, and apparently experience, to disbelieve anything which Major Byron writes or promises. Then she decides that, since he still has so many more Shelley letters, it would be better when Hookham is bargaining "to offer so much per letter (one pound for instance)." But Mary will not limit her purchases to Shelley letters alone—but will offer "for all others half a crown".[18]

She is eager to acquire any Shelley letters which are put up at auction, and asks Hookham to "have an eye to any auctions of autographs". Her

[17] A series of letters in Byron's hand, dated February 4, 1846 through August 18, 1846, are all addressed from Greenwich He must have had at least a mailing address there at this time, for he records having received mail Byron wrote from the Royal Thames Yacht Club, 11 Clarence Street, 14 Haddington Terrace, and 2 King Street, all in Greenwich, in 1846

[18] 2½ shillings, or a ratio of 8 to 1 for a Shelley letter as over against a non-Shelley letter[1]

weakness is immediately apparent, even though she knows she is treating with a "rogue", when she says "I cannot afford to give more or I might be fool enough to do it—but I *cannot*".

Byron (Mary now knows or mentions his full name for the first time!) has not only Shelley letters and Mary letters, but "poems" of Shelley as well Mary has hastily scribbled, at the top of page 1 of this letter, the fact that "The poems you talk of are mere copies of course".

Byron has been writing letters to her which are "blackguard & threatening", but Mary merely welcomes more of the same sort, implying that some sort of legal action may result And, though she terms Byron a swindler, she urges Hookham to continue buying from him at her price!

By now it must be apparent that considerable time has elapsed between Letters 627 and 623 It seems hardly likely, for example, that the enthusiasm which Mary displayed on October 28, 1845, should in a few days have subsided into the disgust she betrays in Letter 623

Recognition of this apparent inconsistency led to further examination of the letter (623) in the Berg Collection, with the result that a date in pencil was observed on page 1 "Feb 28/46". As Jones points out[19] in another letter of the same library similarly marked, this pencilled date must refer to the "postmark on the now lost envelope" The 28th of February, 1846, was a Saturday, which could have been the date of the postmark, and the "Friday" date at the head of this letter (not "Friday Evg", which is the date for Letter 624) becomes February 27, 1846

Now, if this date be accepted—and it is surely more likely than Jones' October 31, 1845[20]—the sequence of events is not compressed, as Jones insists, into fifteen days (Tuesday, October 28, to Wednesday, November 12, 1845), in which brief space Mary would have had to write eight letters to Hookham and at least one to Peacock, would have had to make two trips to Hookham and one to Peacock, would have had to receive enough notes from the "Rascal" to make her sick, and would have had to recover from an illness which kept her "in bed far to ill to attend to business" Furthermore, in the same period Mary specifically bids Hookham not to "go so far as assenting even to this arrangement for 10 days or a fortnight" and in another laments that "The Man has not come—and now some days are gone by"

If still further argument is necessary, the content of the letters shows that Jones' present arrangement is based wholly on the assumption that, since the earliest dated letter is October 28th (Letter 621) and Byron's receipt is dated November 12th, all the six remaining undated letters (623-

[19] Letter 638, volume II, page 284

[20] It is generally the practice of editors who supply conjectural dates for letters to place these dates within brackets (as Jones has done) and to use a question mark (which Jones has not done) to indicate uncertainty There is nowhere any indication that the year should be 1845, the month October, or the day the 31st, as Jones has it

628) must have been written between these two dates! Of the whole eleven letters from Mary to Hookham, only four (621, 622, 651, 652) bear exact dates, all the others are without them

Study of the types of letter paper which Mary used shows that the following four letters are on the same paper. 621, 622, 627, and 628[21] Another three letters are likewise on similar paper. 623, 624, 626[22] No design or mark is to be found on 625 (which is a small piece of note paper, incomplete because torn from a larger sheet), and 653 is on "J Roberts Pimlico" stationery Though not conclusive proof by itself, the similarity in type of paper would suggest that like paper—when undated—should be grouped together at like dates, unless there is definite evidence, internal or external, to the contrary Mary might reasonably be expected to use one type of stationery until she ran out of it, when she would use another Added to the pencilled date on Letter 623, this paper evidence would suggest that this letter was written after 628

This change of date from Jones's conjectured October 31, 1845 to February 27, 1846 puts a very different aspect on the November 12 receipt signed by "G B—" We see now that the £30 then advanced to him was not for all the letters,[23] but only for some, we do not know for how many At a pound a piece, which is what Mary later thought a fair price, he would have given thirty letters, unless he drove a hard bargain

Letter 623 (of February 27, 1846) is surely followed by one apparently written on the evening of the same day, after Mary had received a letter from Hookham enclosing eight letters he had purchased from Byron Here is letter 624

2

Dear Sir

A few more words – I mentioned £1 a piece for any letters of Shelley – I take it for granted that even if you have already written to this fellow you have not mentioned this specifically because [crossed out in the original] one or two things suggest themselves to me on this I see you mention 8 letters of Shelley dated 1816 – Are these to me? because otherwise I would not treat in the same manner or on these terms – they must be *bona fide* letters to *me*

As to a fragment of an unpublished poem it is of course only a bit of copy – & not worth regard

[21] Marked with a small circular raised imprint, about ¼ inch wide, reading "Satin Post", with a crown between the two words

[22] Marked with a small circular raised imprint, about ¼ inch in diameter, reading "Satin" (but not "Satin Post"), with a leaf or flower design in center

[23] This is clear from Letter 653, in which Mary shows that more than one group of letters was bought

(Except that I desire to possess every scrap in Shelley's hand – & if you treat, you wd bargain for ALL) —

2 letters of Mrs S – do you mean Harriet – I doubt that they are hers –

In fact the rest are mere private papers – of which the rascal could make no possible use – but he must *give all up* or he will receive *no money*

I fear he has *many more*

The way we must manage is to demand all at so much a letter – *Nothing* unless he give *all* – but as I doubt Shelley's are bona fide letters to me – in which case I wd only give £5 for all – but it is better to treat at so much per letter –

Above all let me beg of you to shew every backwardness to treat at all I am not afraid of the rogue – he has more cause to fear me – & I would buy these simply for the pleasure of having them – but cannot afford to pay high for any pleasure & must therefore go without if he prove impracticable

At so much per letter remember – as he has more & will come again – & not more than I mentioned before

And do not go so far as assenting even to this arrangement for 10 days or a fortnight

Putney Ys Truly
Friday Evg M S

You say "Why take more trouble if he will give up those on the list for £5 – certainly not – I would give £5 & have done – but has he said he will? I fancy not – & wd at first scout so small a sum – And have you seen the letters? I will call on Monday & hear about all this

I only got 8 2^{d} letters this afternoon

By now Mary had received from Hookham a list of the Shelley letters in Byron's possession "8 letters of Shelley dated 1815"[24] Since this year, 1816, was a crucial year for Shelley, the year of two suicides (Fanny's and Harriet's) and a wedding, letters of this period would possess a special attraction for Mary

The fragment of a poem Mary again condemns as a bit of copy—but then shows how extremely gullible she is "(Except that I desire to possess every scrap in Shelley's hand—& if you treat, you wd bargain for ALL)—"

Byron has "2 letters of Mrs S" and "private papers"—and Mary bids fair to take them all "The list" is mentioned in the postscript, but Hookham has not made clear to Mary whether he has seen the letters themselves

[24] In the spurious *Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley* published by Moxon in 1852, there were five letters of 1816, all forgeries, and all forged by G Byron There may or may not be a connection here Another 1816 forgery, the Dec 15-16, 1816 letter, found its way into the Wise collection

or the list only Byron was, through the list, gauging the possible market for his wares

Then Mary writes, "I only got 8 2[d] letters this afternoon" This is a most tantalizing sentence Does she mean letters for which she paid less than half a crown each? Or does she feel that these eight letters are not of great import?

Letter 626 very likely should come next (earliest possible date ? March 2, 1846), and here a new note is injected. Byron had apparently threatened to have the letters published if Mary did not pay the price he wanted She answered: "No bookseller could publish poem or letter . The fellow is a rogue & has more letters so a £1 price[25] is safer & better."

Mary is ill (this may be the sickness she speaks of in her letter to Medwin, Letter 643, page 289, volume II), either at Putney or Chester Square [26]

The next letter should probably be 625, in which Mary speaks words which are quite true "I dare say it seems odd to you how I bargain with this fellow" This is one thing that any reasonable person must wonder when viewing this strange relationship between Mary and a man whom she recognizes as a swindler—yet persists in dealing with. She repeats her disbelief in the poem, which, the shrewd Byron has apparently insisted, is "original", it is, she reiterates, "a bit of copy" (Letters 623 and 624 have already dealt with this, which Byron last called "an unpublished poem").

Her next letter, 653, records receipt of letters, "The letters you last sent" She is still (as in letter 626) confined to her bed "by serious illness".

This letter is conjecturally dated "(?October-November, 1846)" by Jones because he believes that it follows the dated letters 651-652, and because letter 653 has 24 Chester Sq as its address But Mary lived in Chester Square not only in November, 1846, but also early in 1846 (see note 26 below). Her letter 654 states "I went to Baden-Baden this last summer & have returned better, tho' not quite recovered"—which is surely not the same as being very ill, confined to her room

Jones believes that 653 must follow letters 651-652 because "Byron did not get legal authority to repossess the letters, which Holcroft must then have turned over to Hookham, who in turn sent them to Mary, as her grateful note to Hookham shows"[27]

Oddly enough, this tower of conjecture leans squarely upon the date of Letter 653; that is, Letter 653 must be dated later than September 12, 1846,

[25] Jones mis-reads this as "a £1 [a] piece"

[26] The date at which Mary moved to 24 Chester Square is uncertain In Letter 638 Mary says she expects to move there "early in February", which would be February, 1846 But we have her writing two letters from Putney on February 9 (1846) Letter 643, which cannot be exactly dated except as May-June, gives her London address as Chester Square But we have dated Letters 623 and 624 as February 27, 1846—and these were written from Putney. Apparently she was at Chester Square in March through July (?)

[27] Volume II, page 265

or else it obviously cannot be placed after letters 651 and 652. But the date of the letter (no envelope remains) must be drawn from the single word "Wednesday" and the place "24 Chester Square" Of course Mary was —as Jones suggests—in Chester Square in October or December, 1846, but she was there also in March or April or May or June or July of 1846! Other evidence must then be adduced to set it after Letter 652.

The content of Letter 653 belies Jones' theory, for though it is true that Mary thanks Hookham for letters, she does not mention, or even imply, that the letters were secured by a court victory On the contrary, she as much as says that the price paid for the letters was a reasonable one. "A[t] first he hoped for hundreds had be got them he would have grasped at thousands—now he is obliged to content himself with units".

Yet Letter 651, responding to Hookham's plan to repossess the letters in court, had said "I am not sure that the best mode of action is not to let him have them again . . . & defy him to make any use of them" More important is her last admonition· "The great thing will be to avoid police reports & police magistrates "[28]

Letter 651, then, gives no indication that Mary wants to deal with Byron at all Not only does she not want to buy anything from him, but she counsels defiance only Would Mary a month or so later be begging Hookham, as in Letter 653, to get more letters from Byron· *"I am sure* this man has *many more letters*[29]—in time I hope to get them—he will come again . . . Dont raise the mans hopes about money or he will become impracticable he has *many more* manage to get them" There is no great contempt for Byron here, merely a wariness against his demands Observe that she remarks "Now he is obliged to content himself with units", suggesting (with the "Now") negotiations at this time

A final argument against the present dating of Letter 653 is that both letters 651 and 652 are on black-bordered paper[30] in mourning for Lady Shelley, as late as March 29, 1847 (Letter 658) her letters still bore marks of mourning Is it likely that Mary would so soon drop her mourning stationery, just a month after she began using it?[31]

[28] Not, as Jones reads it (II, 295): "The great thing [is] will he avoid police reports & police magistrates "

A careful search of the London *Times* "Police" column from July 1, 1846 through December 31, 1846 reveals no action at Bow Street Magistrate's Court involving Byron, Memon, Holcroft, Hookham, or Mrs Shelley

[29] Not *"many more others"* as in Jones (II, 296)

[30] This fact is not indicated by Jones (II, 295)

[31] Evidence of this kind is, of course, corroborative rather than conclusive Jones does not mention mourning borders for letters 654 through 657 (though 3 out of these 4 have conjectural dates only) But, since Jones also did not indicate that Letters 651 and 652 are on mourning paper, it is at least possible that he omitted the same notation on others

In the light of the re-arrangement of Mary Shelley letters suggested above, both by different dating and by proper printing, several of Professor Jones' conclusions must be revised His idea that Mary's dealings with G Byron were temporarily concluded with the letter-receipt is, of course, not correct The bargaining and purchasing did not stop with November 12, 1845, indeed, it more likely began with that date

We are certain of a beginning date, for Letters 621-622 are dated in late October, 1845 Mary seems to have received her first parcel of letters from Byron (through Hookham) in return for the £30 which "G B—" was so careful to call "a loan" Another group of eight letters was acknowledged by Mary in Letter 624 (probably to be dated February 27, 1846), but her casual mention of them "I only got 8 2^{d} letters this afternoon" suggests that she had been buying letters all along, and these happen not to strike her fancy as important This same letter urges Hookham to "bargain for *all*", so that Mary has clearly not been disappointed in the letters so far received. A third wave of letters—which did set off enthusiasm in Mary's response "I cannot express the great pleasure it has given me to have the letters you last sent"—arrived in the Spring of 1846(?), when Mary was in Chester Square Here again she does not consider the matter closed—or the letters worthless, instead, she concludes her note most dramatically. "he has *many more* manage to get them".

If the beginning of the dealing with Byron be set for October, 1845, the ending must surely be before September 12, 1846, when Mary wrote to Hookham from Baden-Baden It is clear that, if Mary did receive any more letters from Byron, it was through Hookham's legal interdict and not by purchase except from the Hodges sale of 1848.

We surely are not clear as to what happened—if anything—in the Bow Street court.[32] A mis-reading of manuscript by Jones sets up another story which does not fit the facts; Jones prints part of a letter from Thomas Holcroft thus:

> Acting on the maxim, 'Fas est ab Hoste doceri' I copy for your guidance the legal interdict wch I recd from TH Byrons Solicitor in re Shelley Papers—[33]

From this, Jones deduces that Holcroft was Byron's solicitor, when in fact the letter reads as follows:

> Acting on the maxim, 'Fas est ab Hoste doceri' I copy for your guidance the legal interdict wch I recd from Mr Byrons Solicitor in re Shelley Papers—

[32] See footnote 28 above.
[33] Volume II, page 264

Holcroft, then, was not Byron's, but Memon's solicitor Byron's lawyer, whoever he was, had received from Hookham the interdict, a copy of which he sent to Holcroft Holcroft, telling Hookham in Latin that "It is right to be taught even by an enemy", does not point out a course to be followed

Memon had thought of publishing these letters, no doubt, unless Mary wished to suppress them by purchasing them [34] But Hookham intervened, —though Mary was not too keen, advocating defiance merely,—to prevent the letters from getting back into Byron's hands Mary wisely remarked (Letter 652) "for of what use is it to make a fuss about keeping one set of copies, when having another, he can make as many as he likes?"

What came of these copies, then, is not at the moment known, nor are we certain as to who instituted the Bow Street action Mary's caution about police reports and magistrates seems to eliminate Hookham, it is likely that Byron brought the action

How many letters, copies, poems—Mary had said "I desire to possess every scrap in Shelley's hand"—found their way from Byron through Hookham to Mary we shall perhaps never know. Nor can we ascertain what percentage of Mary's purchases were genuine,[35] which were "copies" (is "copies" merely another name for "forgeries"?), and which were certainly spurious

We know, however, that G Byron carried on a long and involved series of negotiations with Hookham Jones thinks that Mary would likely not be duped by forgeries, for she knew Shelley's writing so well But we must not forget Mary's unbridled eagerness to collect all materials relating to Shelley, we must recall,—in spite of her repeated protestations that the man was a swindler, rogue, and rascal and that the letters were not *bona fide*—that she still bought and bought and bought of him, for a period well over four months, and perhaps for longer

Mary appears not to suspect forgeries, for G Byron had access to undoubted Shelley materials [36] He was a pastmaster at fabrication of seals and postmarks Not once does she call the man a forger, and Mary seems not too perturbed at receiving copies only

It must be remembered, too, that George Byron was a most skillful imitator of handwriting His Byron forgeries, for example, were in John Mur-

[34] Moxon, according to White, said later that Mr Byron "had been troublesome to the family, in endeavoring to extort money for the purpose of suppressing" letters

[35] Byron had told White "that the Shelley letters had been collected in various ways, some, he thought, from the Marlow Box, and from various quarters which" White could not remember

[36] Shelley's *Essays and Letters* , 1840, was a harvest for the forger The *Westminster Review* (April, 1841) and the *British Quarterly Review* (November, 1848) printed Shelley letters which the forger copied or used The memoir by Redding contained a letter of Shelley's which was also employed Where Byron found a copy of P W Longdill's letter of August 5, 1817 to Shelley is a mystery, for this letter was in the Shelley family's possession in 1859—unless this is one of the "private papers" Mary refers to

ray's hands for nearly three full years (April, 1849 to February, 1852), and Murray had not in all that time discovered their falseness, only the revelation of the 1852 Shelley forgeries made him look to his own purchases from William White. Also in 1851 Murray had bought at auction manuscripts purportedly by Byron the poet (which were in fact by Byron the forger) whose genuineness he believed in, and whose spuriousness did not disclose itself until 1852

Richard Monckton Milnes, too, the famed editor of Keats' letters purchased manuscripts and letter (products of G Byron) supposedly in the hand of Keats—and noted his error only after the 1852 Shelley hoax was made known, whereupon he called the forgeries "a monument of criminal ingenuity"

Edward Moxon, who had likewise bought from White the twenty-three so-called Shelley letters, was so taken in by these G Byron forgeries that he published them, thinking them Shelley's own!

Hookham, who was familiar with Shelley's handwriting, bought at auction in 1851 eleven letters, forged by Byron, alleged to be by Shelley. Was Hookham, fooled thus in 1851, a better judge of Shelley's genuine handwriting in 1845-6 than he was in 1851?

These considerations must give us pause before we jump to the conclusion that Mary would not or did not buy forgeries from Byron in this period We are, on the other hand, certain that the Shelley family archives themselves contained many forgeries[37]

Where did these forgeries originate—if not in the fertile pen of the master-forger, G Byron, himself? We know Mary bought an indeterminate number of letters from Byron Indeed, she must have been satisfied that she had received from him all his valuable and "original" materials, for Letter 651 shows her not eager to claim at law copies of letters which Byron had placed in Memon's hands Had Mary considered these copies of any value to her, she would have shared Hookham's eagerness to keep Byron from regaining them

But it seems clear that Mary wanted all the letters, whether *bona fide* or not Professor Jones unwisely argues that Mary would buy only genuine letters—Mary herself refutes this theory in her oft-repeated pleas to Hookham to get more and more letters. From her point of view forged letters full of

[37] Eleven forgeries were bought at the May, 1851 sale for Sir Percy Another letter from the 1848 Hodges sale was published by Dowden in 1886 and was branded a forgery in 1889 Lady Shelley admitted that there were at least three "copies" of the December 15-16, 1816 letter which she had seen—all forgeries, including the fourth "on note paper" which she blandly called the "original". In another place Lady Shelley talks of the number of clever forgeries she has seen Dowden, in the *Athenaeum* for 1889, spoke of the forgeries against which the biographer of Shelley had constantly to be on guard—these too were in the Shelley vaults Reference has already been made to Hogg's and Hunt's remarks on this subject, and to Medwin's having heard from G Byron of a large collection of Shelley letters

false or sensational statements about Shelley's life were just as threatening to her peace of mind and to the reputation she had by 1846 builded for Shelley On the other hand, if the series of false letters contained, as they do, repeated outright charges or innuendo against Harriet, if they absolved Shelley and cast a fair light on Mary's devotion and sanctified their elopement—what a great temptation was there (forged so skillfully as the letters were) to buy these letters Then she did not destroy them, but kept them in a packet marked "Shelley Letters", and this package was found by Lady Shelley after Mary's death—a year after Much to Lady Shelley's surprise, these letters were found to be the same as those purchased on two occasions at high prices (£57 15s for the first group in May, 1851)—except that Lady Shelley was sure that those in Mary's packet were "originals" But the letters were the same because the two sets were done by the same hand—G Byron's!

2. THE SUBSEQUENT CAREER OF MAJOR BYRON

When the Major found it impossible to publish in England his projected life of Lord Byron, he turned, as we saw, to selling White, the bookseller, the forged Byron, Shelley, and Keats letters and manuscripts As late as April 1, 1848, the solicitors of the Byron family, Messrs Jenkyns and Phelps, had denounced him in the columns of the *Athenaeum*.[1]

White asserted that he had first met the "Lady Incognita" (the Major's clever wife) in the summer of 1848, and bought from her the Byron letters, forty-seven in all, which John Murray III finally purchased from White on April 28, 1849

The Hodges sale, in December, 1848, included seven Shelley letters[2] and a Shelley manuscript (all the handiwork of G Byron) White recounts that he compared one of his manuscripts – purchased from G Byron – with one in the Hodges sale, White found his longer and postmarked, whereupon he decided his was the "original" and the Hodges letter a "copy" This would show that the forger, by 1848, had manufactured Shelley letters for sale to White We know that the Major was actually working on Shelley forgeries as late as November 1, 1848, by the fact that his version of the twenty-third letter of the 1852 volume of Shelley *Letters* was drawn from the November 1st issue of the *British Quarterly Review*,[3] how much later than this date the Major took this text for his own we have no way of knowing

[1] No 1066, April 1, 1848, page 341

[2] Four of these letters were to Graham, three to Mary Shelley Half of the Graham letters went to Thomas Phillips of Cheltenham, the other five items were bought by Evans for Mary Shelley

[3] By comparing the 1852 forged text with two texts available to the forger, that in the *Westminster Review* for 1841 and that in the *British Quarterly Review* for 1848, it is obvious that the source of the forger's material for this letter was the latter The great differences in text and punctuation establish this clearly

By the summer of 1849, we know that the forger had completed and passed on to White at least another ten forgeries of Shelley letters, for on July 10, Puttick and Simpson put up for sale that many letters.[4] Of this number, eight were bought in by "B" for White and appeared again in the May, 1851 sale at Sotheby's

In addition to these eight, which appeared in both the 1849 and 1851 sales, the forger had time to construct fifteen more supposed Shelley letters before the end of July. Then, very likely, he left for New York (unless he composed these letters when he returned to London again in the winter of 1850-1851) We know that he was in New York by August 21, 1849, for we find him advertising in the *Evening Post*[5] his "edition of Byron" which had suffered such an unhappy fate in England But the forger (he had by now added to himself the title of "Major") was not afraid to mention his previous difficulties

> The publication of these works of the Poet in England having been prevented by an injunction of the Lord Chancellor, obtained through a combination of influences of which it is unnecessary to speak, the editor has determined to give them to the public of the United States, and thus place the world in possession of the materials for doing justice to the greatest of modern poets [6]

On November 6, 1849, then, appeared Part I of the *Inedited Works of Lord Byron, Now First Published from His Letters, Journals, and Other Manuscripts, in the Possession of his Son, Major George Gordon Byron,* published by G G Byron, 257 Broadway, and R Martin, 46 Ann-Street, both of New York. Its price was twenty-five cents, it was well-printed, contained a frontispiece, and ran to forty-eight pages.

The Major's opening words are illustrative of the methods he employed to gather his materials:

> After my arrival I lost no time in seeking to enrich my stores by the acquisition of every scrap which bore the hallowed impress of his mind With the exception of one or two churlish refusals, I received nothing but courtesy in reply to my applications to those who had been in communication at any period of their lives with the late Lord Byron In most cases copies of letters and documents were sent to me; or, where withheld, reasons, which it became not me to question, were assigned, so courteously worded,

[4] Two of these letters were addressed to Lawrence, five to Graham, and two to Godwin Another, according to De Ricci, page 293, was apparently sold to Donnadieu, "who must have returned it soon after" This was addressed to the Editor of the *Statesman*

[5] The advertisements, dated August 21st, were run in this paper on September 8, 21, October 9, 19, 22 The second advertisement, which delayed publication to November 5th, ran three times: October 27, 30, and November 1, 1849

[6] *Evening Post* (New York) September 8, 1849, page 2.

> that personally I could not but feel gratified By these means I have been enabled to bring together such an amount of correspondence and unpublished matter, both in prose and verse, that in justice to my father's memory I considered myself called upon to place it before the public.[7]

This explains fully in his own words how the Major had been able to secure so many original materials, which he put to his own uses

The volume was accorded a long, careful review in a reputable New York literary journal of the day, in which the editor was shrewd enough to look up the history of the Major as it was recorded in London magazines, notably the *Athenaeum*[8] Other reviewers were not so wary, however, as we note in:

> We wish all success to his truly worthy and honorable endeavors to rescue the memory of his father from the disgraces which have been heaped upon it.[9]

Another writer thought that the book should and would "command extensive patronage, more particularly that the English seem over anxious to condemn it"[10]

The Second Part of the *Inedited Works* was issued either late in 1849 or early in 1850 (its copyright date is 1849, but the reviews are dated 1850), with which the project stopped[11] The Major apparently traveled to England, where it is known that he sold manuscripts to John Murray III[12] Notwithstanding, the second part was reviewed favorably in the same journal which had been so suspicious of its first issue[13]

Though it is not properly the province of this book to study carefully the *Inedited Works of Lord Byron,* we may glance at the physical appearance of these relatively scarce publications They are both bound in a green paper, the first is marked "Part I. Price 25 cts" and the second was mis-labeled "Part L", and an Arabic "2" was stamped over it[14] Both have frontispieces, the first a "Statue of Lord Byron by Thorwaldsen, In the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge," and the second an engraving of "Newstead Abbey"

Part I is composed of 48 pages, with the first four concerned with prefatory remarks; page 5 begins, in 1811, with "Additional Notices of the

[7] *The Inedited Works* Part I, pages 2-3

[8] *Literary World* (New York) 5 422-423 November 17, 1849 The editor discovered, for example, that the Major's projected life of Byron had been stopped by legal means At this time no one was aware of the Major's penchant for forging Byron and Shelley documents

[9] *American Review* 10, no 24 658 December, 1849

[10] *United States Magazine & Democratic Review* new series 25 575 December, 1849

[11] *The Works of Lord Byron Letters and Journals* Volume VI. Edited by Rowland E Prothero London, John Murray, 1901 Page 460

[12] Chew, Samuel C *Byron in England* London, Murray, 1924 Page 188

[13] *Literary World* (New York) 6 125-6 February 9, 1850

[14] The New York Public Library copy is so marked

Life of Lord Byron" Eleven letters of Byron (most of them to Dallas) are given here

Part II begins with page 49, and continues to page 96, where it ends in mid-sentence ". . . for him Etruria is a teeming soil, and the spirit of song haunts Ravenna and". This part contains eight more letters, and in footnotes reprints two letter refusals of help on the *Life*, by John Fitz-Gibbon, second Earl of Clare [15]

Of the total of nineteen Byron letters which the Major included in the two parts, five were reprinted by Prothero in his edition of Byron's letters [16] Why no more than this were used—whether the remainder were copied by the Major from other sources, or whether they were forged—is not our immediate concern The facts as stated, that Prothero did reprint some of the letters, and that Murray bought the remaining materials from the Major after the publication of Part II, perhaps indicate that, however and wherever he obtained them, the forger had some genuine Byron matter in his hands when he published the *Inedited Works*.

The Major is supposed to have been in London during the winter of 1850-1851, perhaps then it was that he sold what further Byron papers he had in his possession to Murray, for surely Murray bought these before the story of the forgery of the 1852 Moxon volume broke, in late February, 1852

From this time on, many of the Major's activities are confined to the United States In 1862 he is described as having gone to Missouri to attach himself to General Fremont's command [17] He had, according to this account, now adopted the title of "Captain" In the New York City directory he had himself listed as. "George Gordon Byron, U S. A" which he repeated the following year [18] He is reported, in November, 1869, to have gone again to London to put before Lord Wentworth his claim to be recognised as the son of Byron, but his claim was rejected.[19]

The life of the Major in New York was an eventful one, though it never was wholly prosperous·

> His office at No 40 Broadway, where he professed to do business, was rather a mythical one, he having simply permission to use part of a room there He made a show of doing business by

[15] *The Inedited Works* . Part II Pages 64-65 The letters are dated February 19 and 23, 1847

[16] *The Works of Lord Byron, op. cit*, pages 466-467

[17] *Evening Post* (New York), Tuesday, February 11, 1862, page 1, column 1, entitled "A Son of Lord Byron in the Army", a dispatch from St Louis, Missouri, dated February 7th But examination of the Army lists for this period does not reveal the Major's name thereon

[18] *Trow's New York City Directory*, volume 76, for the year ending May 1 1863, and Volume 77, for the year ending May 1, 1864

[19] Mrs Anna Cora Mowatt Ritchie so indicated in the San Francisco *Chronicle*, Dec. 19, 1869

> exhibiting what he called a patent fish-tail rudder in a trough of water [20]

In 1872 he was the defendant in an action in supplementary proceedings in New York City, in which damages, costs, and allowances were assessed against him in the amount of $73 25 [21]

Things became so bad for the Major that his wife had to go to work, she was, for a time, housekeeper at the Hoffman House. The Major took his meals there regularly, but whether he ate in the main dining hall or in the kitchen is not recorded

The Byrons had six children one, Irving, had an unattractive criminal record Another, Percy (was he named for Shelley?), obtained unwholesome notoriety for himself by an attempt at suicide Only a scalp wound resulted, however, and the bullet was promptly extracted [22]

Perhaps no better summary of the Major's later career can be given than this·

> He used to wear a semi-military uniform, with spurs, and carried a lady's riding whip in his hand He posed at various times, as a litterateur, a journalist, a diplomatist, a Government agent, an officer of the British army in the East Indies, a British naval officer, an officer of the United States Army, a mining prospector, a broker, a merchant, a spy, an agent for cotton claims, a commission agent, an Oriental traveler, a representative of European mercantile interests, a bookseller, a patents right agent, a gentleman of means, and an aristocratic exile, expatriated and pensioned on condition that he should never reveal his genealogy [23]

He is supposed to have returned to England, where he died in 1882 But the Directory for New York, for the year ending May 1, 1885, lists him as a merchant doing business at 66 Pearl Street, with his home in Orange, New Jersey

[20] *American Antiquarian* 4, no 4 327-30 March, 1886

[21] *Judgments, Transcripts, & Decrees County Clerk's Office* (Manhattan) Volume A-B, 1871-1872 Page 144, last item The judgment was rendered on January 6, 1872, in the Sixth Judicial District The transcript was filed on February 2, 1872 The plaintiffs were Welwood Murray and E Erskine Murray, they were, apparently, dealers in laces, with their place of business at 523 Broadway, according to the New York City *Directory* for 1872 Peculiarly enough, the Major appears in these records as "H A Byron"

[22] *American Antiquarian* 4, no 4 330 March, 1886

[23] *Ibid*

3 MAJOR BYRON'S FORGED LETTERS ABOUT HARRIET

The Letter to Mary of December 16, 1816.

This chapter of the Shelley legend discusses the origin, provenance, and handwriting of the most controversial of all alleged Shelley letters—the letter of December 15 (or 16), 1816, which Shelley is supposed to have sent from London to Mary at Bath. It was the occasion of a fervid controversy in the *Times Literary Supplement* eight years ago when Seymour de Ricci, the noted compiler of a *Bibliography of Shelley Letters* (1927), defended the authenticity of this holograph letter, then in the possession of Thomas J Wise, while Sylva Norman and Graham Pollard were as persistently questioning it [1]

The importance of this letter to Shelley biography must not be underestimated, for upon a single paragraph in it depends one of the major charges against Harriet Westbrook (Shelley's first wife) as a prostitute, and her sister Eliza as a murderess It is a charge against Harriet that Shelley admirers would gladly have expunged from his record, against Eliza the allegation is refuted by a friendly note which Shelley sent to her two days after the date of this accusation [2] Notwithstanding the doubts which have been cast upon this letter now and then through the years, it has been accepted by the standard Shelley biographers from Dowden to Peck and is allegedly printed in full from the Wise holograph by Roger Ingpen in the Julian Edition of his Shelley *Letters,*[3] and by Professor White in his recent monumental work on Shelley.[4]

According to the accepted account in the *Shelley and Mary* journals, Shelley returned from London, where he had been visiting Hunt, to Bath on Saturday evening, December 14, 1816, to receive on Sunday the 15th a letter from his friend Thomas Hookham relating the news of Harriet's suicide. He walked out with Mary, and then after dinner returned to London, traveling all night in order to secure his children by Harriet,—Ianthe and Charles Having spent the day of the 16th, Monday, as he says, in "somewhat agonizing sensations", and having failed to obtain his children, he wrote Mary the letter in question in time for the evening mail

[1] *Times Literary Supplement,* 1937, pp 222, 240, 256, 275, 292, 308, 364, 412, 428, see also 1927, pp 894, 977

[2] *Shelley's Lost Letters to Harriet,* edited with an introduction by Hotson, London, 1930, pp 54-56

[3] *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley Letters* . New York, Scribner's, 1926, volume IX, pp 211-213

[4] *Shelley,* by Newman Ivey White, New York, Knopf, 1940, volume I, pp 484-485, notes on p 723

The paragraph which has caused so much pain and comment is as follows

> It seems that this poor woman — the most innocent of her abhorred and unnatural family — was driven from her father's house, and descended the steps of prostitution until she lived with a groom of the name of Smith, who deserting her, she killed herself — There can be no question that the beastly viper her sister, unable to gain profit from her connexion with me — has secured to herself the fortune of the old man — who is now dying — by the murder of this poor creature Every thing tends to prove, however, that beyond the mere shock of so hideous a catastrophe having fallen on a human being once so nearly connected with me, there would, in any case have been little to regret Hookham, Longdill — every one, does me full justice,— bears testimony to the upright spirit and liberality of my conduct to her — there is but one voice in condemnation of the detestable Westbrooks If they should dare to bring it before Chancery, a scene of such fearful horror would be unfolded as would cover them with scorn and shame

Strong evidence that Shelley never heard of this charge of prostitution and that it is a later fabrication, lies in the fact that he never utilized it in the Chancery suit that immediately followed.

The paradox of Shelley criticism, however, is that in late years this story of Harriet has been increasingly doubted Professor Peck strongly reproves the Shelley family's attempt to whitewash Shelley, yet accepts this Wise letter as genuine[5] Professor White is in the uncomfortable position of accepting and printing the same letter as authentic, and yet disbelieving the calumnies against Harriet, which Dowden, working under the influence of Mary Shelley's heirs, was too ready to introduce into his standard biography of 1886 White goes so far as to say that "No biographer since Dowden has credited the idea" of Harriet's infidelity[6] and adds his conviction, in which we agree with him, that there was no infidelity on Harriet's part Her last letter to Catherine Nugent shows, as Professor White avers, that Harriet loved Shelley until the day of her death

If, then, the Wise holograph, which is held by Wise, Seymour de Ricci and White to be Shelley's genuine autograph, can be proved a forgery, Shelley's responsibility for this dubious letter disappears, unless there exists somewhere an undisclosed original Certainly all the known manuscript versions, as we shall show, are forgeries We cannot, therefore, without evidence of an original, accept Professor White's evasion of these difficulties by stating

[5] W E Peck *Shelley His Life and Work*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1927, volume I, p 504

[6] White, *op cit*, I, p 677

that critics agree that the forgeries of this letter are based on an original (White, I p 723, n. 45) Mr Blunden, Mr. Pollard, and Miss Norman made no such contention, and Mr De Ricci's statements are merely conjectures That there was a genuine original stands in need of proof, it cannot be assumed Prior authorities, Dowden, Forman, Ingpen, believed the forged letters under discussion genuine

Provenance

The surprising fact issuing from an examination of the provenance of this letter is that it was recognized and pronounced a forgery when it first appeared If it was a forgery in 1846 and proclaimed a forgery in 1852, there should be no difficulty in demonstrating that it is one now.

We have already recounted how during the years 1845-1851 a notorious forger, who styled himself "Major George Byron" and who claimed to be an illegitimate son of Lord Byron, foisted upon the book trade batches of forged letters of Byron, Shelley, and Keats.

To quote the *Athenaeum*·

> But the "marvel" of the forgery is not yet told. At the same sale [May 12, 1851, Sotheby's, p 114] at which Mr Moxon bought the Shelley letters were catalogued for sale a series of (unpublished) letters from Shelley to his wife, revealing the innermost secrets of his heart, and containing facts, not wholly dishonourable facts to a father's memory, but such as a son would wish to conceal These letters were bought in by the son of Shelley, the present Sir Percy Shelley, – and are now proved, we are told, to be forgeries To impose on the credulity of a collector is a minor offense compared with the crime of forging evidence against the dead, and still minor as in one instance against the fidelity of a woman [7]

The Wise December 15-16 letter had its origin with the forger Major Byron, who sold it to William White the bookseller in 1848-9. White passed it, with many other "Shelley" letters, to Samuel L. Sotheby, the auctioneer, in August of 1850 He spent the winter of 1850-1851 reading and cataloguing the letters at his leisure On May 12, 1851, the eleven letters from Shelley to Mary, Lots 1193 through 1203 in the sale, were bought in by Thomas Hookham for Sir Percy Shelley for £57 15 0. When the Shelleys received them, they discovered them to be forgeries and lamented the high price they had paid. Lady Shelley records in her talks with Maud Rolleston that, ironically enough, a friend was also bidding for the letters with the intention of presenting them to the Shelleys

[7] *Athenaeum*, no 1271, March 6, 1852, p 279

The December 16 letter, which we have in question, was number 1201 of this lot No quotation from the text appeared in the catalogue but the description reads·

> 1201 To Mrs. Shelley, as before, 4 pages, London, Dec 15, 1816 Respecting his position with his children, and detailing melancholy circumstances in connexion with the previous years of his life

It was four pages quarto, addressed to "Mrs. Shelley, 12 New Bond St. Bath", and carried one postmark, also forged, of Dec 1816 and the fragmentary remains of a second 1816 postmark just above "Mrs. Shelley".

De Ricci records[8] that it formerly belonged to H Buxton Forman, and passed, by exchange, in 1899, into the collection of Thomas J Wise

It is Mr Wise himself who, in order to establish its authenticity by provenance, claims for it a connecting link with the Shelley family In defending the letter against Mr. Edmund Blunden's suspicions, Mr. Wise states

> The holograph of this letter is in my possession and has been in my possession for twenty-eight years I acquired it from H Buxton Forman It had previously been owned by Shelley's son, Sir Percy Florence Shelley, and is absolutely genuine beyond any possible doubt or question [9]

Had Wise been aware that both Sir Percy and Lady Shelley at different times had themselves declared it a forgery, he would have written differently.

We know also that Forman was in close touch with Sir Percy and Lady Shelley and secured from them valuable items from time to time for his remarkable Shelley library, but we find, as we shall presently disclose, Mr. Wise twice in error: (1) in the length of time (28 years) he said he had owned this letter, and (2) in alleging, with no reference whatever to its peculiarities, that it is absolutely genuine beyond any possible doubt or question Mr. Blunden, however, graciously deferred to Mr. Wise's bludgeon of authority, but when he reprinted his essay in *Votive Tablets,* 1932 (p 227) he gathered courage to add the following footnote

> Mr T J Wise, who owns the letter, took up this point and published his entire conviction that it is in Shelley's handwriting With great respect for his authority in these matters, I must confess that the text of the letter (as well as the queer circumstances recorded above) puzzles me still Did not Hookham report the last state of Harriet in his letter received by Shelley at Bath with Mary? and if so, why did Shelley repeat that matter to Mary from London? How did this letter dated December 15 go back to the post office as undeliverable, if it were the letter which

[8] *Ibid*, p 237
[9] *Times Literary Supplement,* December 22, 1927, p 977

> Mary read and answered on December 17? After the essay above was first printed, Professor Hotson's *Shelley's Lost Letters to Harriet* appeared, and among them one from Shelley to Eliza Westbrook dated December 18, completely contradictory in tone and balance to that of December 15, it is "at least startling," says the editor, "to find the frank and sincere Shelley, three days after branding Eliza as a murderess, assuring the hated women that he gives 'no faith to the imputations generally cast on your conduct or on that of Mr Westbrook'" Professor Hotson, however, makes no suggestion that the letter of December 15 is unsafe I am responsible for that, and believe that the reader will see some grounds for at least scrutinising the matter [Hotson did question the letter in his original *Atlantic Monthly* article; but removed this query from his book]

Mr Blunden was justified in returning to his position of skepticism, for Sylva Norman is quite in error in stating that "all the forgeries bought by Sir Percy and Lady Shelley were destroyed" We know, on the contrary, that Mary and Lady Shelley both retained and preserved the Major Byron forgeries they had purchased

Lady Shelley, moreover, is on record thrice as saying that on three occasions Sir Percy and she had bought forged letters so cleverly fabricated that they had great difficulty in detecting them [*Talks with Lady Shelley;* Lady Shelley's letter of June 9, 1867, in the Berg Collection]:

> The art of forging letters purporting to be relics of men of literary celebrity, and therefore apparently possessing a commercial value, has been brought to a rare perfection by those who have made Mr Shelley's handwriting the object of their imitation Within the last fourteen years, on no less than three occasions, have forged letters been presented to our family for purchase In December, 1851, Sir Percy Shelley and the late Mr Moxon bought several letters, all of which proved to be forgeries, though, on the most careful inspection, we could scarcely detect any difference between these and the originals, for some were exact copies of documents in our possession. The watermark on the paper was generally, though not always, the mark appropriate to the date; and the amount of ingenuity exercised was most extraordinary . . . (dated March 31, 1859, pages v-vi of *Shelley Memorials* . . . edited by Lady Shelley Boston, Ticknor & Fields, 1859).

Moreover, in dividing her possessions in 1892 she passed the forged letters on with the genuine and without such notation to Sir John C Shelley-Rolls and to the Bodleian. The former, if De Ricci is correct, has ten of the eleven sold at Sotheby's to the Shelleys on May 12, 1851; and the Bodleian

has another copy of this letter—also a Major Byron forgery—which is on three sheets of octavo note paper, with a variant text and no address, which Mary Shelley bought from him as early as 1846.

Our examination of Mr. Wise's December 16 letter unfortunately has to be confined to his excellent photo-facsimile reproduction in the *Ashley Library Catalogue*,[10] and in his *A Shelley Library*[11] from which our illustration has been taken. At this time of robot bombing, the manuscript itself, now in the British Museum, is inaccessible Mr. Theodore Besterman[12] states that "five minutes with an ultra-violet lamp and a comparison microscope or a synchrisiscope would in all probability settle the matter out of hand", and "Mr Wise no doubt would be happy to submit the contested Shelley letter to such an examination" We regret our inability to examine the paper, the postmarks, and seals directly

What has happened, however, is that a letter purchased by the Shelley heirs, exposed as a forgery in 1852, discovered by them to be a forgery and twice declared by them to be a forgery, once in 1852, and again, as we shall show, in 1867, has on its transfer from Forman to Wise regained respectability and re-entered Shelley biography in good standing wholly through the equivocal and erroneous statements of Messrs Wise and De Ricci.

An Alleged Provenance

The way to respectability, however, seems to have been, as Mr. Graham Pollard suggests, to establish a new provenance for this letter At any rate—and how, we have no means of knowing—the letter escaped from the Shelley family's possession and was reposted from London on March 29, 1859, and was received at Bath on March 30 The clerk wrote across the top of the cover *not to be found* and in April, as a third postmark indicates, the letter was sent to the Dead Letter Office in London

The letter has been twice sealed, the first seal having torn away a few words of the letter. These had been conjecturally supplied by Dr. Richard Garnett when he visited Lady Shelley's archives at Boscombe Manor in preparation for *Shelley Memorials* (issued as by Lady Shelley, but generally accepted as written by Garnett) which appeared in 1859 At the end of page 3, line 10 we have the beginning of a word in the letters "up"—the rest torn by the seal For the missing words Garnett conjectures "uprightness and " (*Relics of Shelley*), a reading not likely because of the little room left on the sheet for this long word This is proof that Lady Shelley still had the letter shortly before 1859

[10] Volume V, pp 25-26
[11] pp 4-5
[12] *Times Literary Supplement*, 1937, p 308

But by whatever means or by whom the letter was reposted in London in 1859—and we have no clues to explain this transfer—three 1859 postmarks on a letter penned and mailed in 1816 will have to be explained Graham Pollard argues that the 1859 postmarks are forgeries also—and cites the postal laws against De Ricci who, in the heat of his reply to Sylva Norman, makes the preposterous assertion that as an expert stamp collector he can assure us that "deceptive imitations of postmarks do not occur before 1900, at the earliest,"[13] a statement which does not coincide with his own claim, of ten years before, that Major Byron "went so far as to forge postmarks, a far more difficult achievement, as every stamp collector knows, than the imitation of manuscript"[14] Dowden freely admits that "in some of the forgeries postmarks are well imitated,"[15] and the letters of 1852 which Moxon published were proved spurious by discovery that the postmarks were forged[16] Mr Pollard, too, has made other observations on Mr De Ricci's reliability as a postal authority and a postmark expert that need not be repeated here

We may wonder, though, about De Ricci's reliability as a judge of handwriting when he says of this letter

> I have carefully examined the autograph in Mr. Wise's collection and can certify that every line of the text, including the paragraph referred to, is written by Shelley's own hand The genuineness of this autograph is absolutely certain for any one familiar with Shelley's manuscripts[17]

Yet De Ricci had before asserted that Major Byron was "a skillful imitator of handwriting"[18] In answer to Mr Pollard, however, he commits himself to the further embarrassing contradictory statement that "forgers around the year 1850" were "unskillful" and "childish in the extreme"[19]

When we consider the incalculable debt we all owe in Shelley bibliography to the labors of Messrs Wise and De Ricci, we cannot help being disconcerted by these various contradictory statements that only cloud the authenticity of this letter still more.

But is it not necessary to hold, as Mr. Pollard suggests, that the 1859 postmarks are forgeries too, they may be, but this point cannot finally be determined until the letter in the British Museum is again available for examination Still, they have to be accounted for with what evidence remains

Mr. De Ricci has several conjectures On page 237 of his *Bibliography*, De Ricci offers a series of other assertions (upon which Graham Pollard also

[13] *Ibid*, April 24, 1937, p 308
[14] De Ricci, *op cit*, p 293
[15] *Athenaeum*, no 3194, January 12, 1889, p 51
[16] *Ibid*, no 1271, March 6, 1852, pp 278-279
[17] *Times Literary Supplement*, March 27, 1937, p 240
[18] De Ricci, *op cit*, p 293
[19] *Times Literary Supplement*, April 24, 1937, p 308

visits his scepticism) "The postmarks on this letter prove it to have been sent twice through the post from London to Bath, once in 1816 and once in 1859" [Not if the 1859 postmarks are also forgeries] "It is possible that the letter was stolen from Mary, about 1848, by G Byron" This conjecture assumes that G Byron somehow was close enough to Mary to have access to her papers [20]

De Ricci continues—"by accident a subsequent owner mixed it up with his outgoing mail in 1859 The Bath postman of 1859 failed to identify the addressee and the letter then went to the dead-letter office, from which it was rescued by a wide-awake collector (a certain C H Taylor)"

Mr Blunden writes that he had in his possession a purported copy of a letter this "wide-awake collector" sent to Leigh Hunt If so, this must have occurred between April and August 28 when Hunt died Moreover, the "wide-awake collector", trying to interest Hunt in purchasing the letter, sent Hunt only a copy and retained the one he had found—all of which, Blunden says, tends "to increase one's doubts"[21] The improbability of the C H Taylor story lies in the questions just how could a "wide-awake collector" rescue a letter from the Dead Letter Office, and how could he offer it to Hunt for sale?

So far we have recounted the provenance as debated up to this time by the critics who have speculated about this puzzling letter. But now have just come to light, returned from evacuation, in the Henry W and Albert A Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, twelve hitherto undisclosed letters which take up the trail of this letter after 1859 and cast a more correct light on its further provenance [22]

The New Provenance

On June 6, 1867, John Tilley, Secretary of the General Post Office, London, sent this same Bath letter to Spencer Shelley with whom he was evidently on friendly terms, as he addressed him "My dear Shelley," as well as "Mr Shelley" Spencer Shelley was the youngest and last survivor of the children of Sir John Shelley 6th Bart of the *elder* branch of the Shelley family—the Poet's family being the younger branch and represented at that time by another Sir John Shelley, the poet's youngest brother. Mr. Tilley (writing his note on embossed post office stationery) explained that the

[20] De Ricci is in error in stating (p 238) that this purchase was the one given in 1892 by Lady Shelley to the Bodleian, that copy is not 4 pages quarto but three sheets of large note paper, octavo, and has been pronounced by Ingpen and Wise a copy, by De Ricci and Grylls, a forgery It is not in Shelley's handwriting

[21] *Times Literary Supplement*, December 1, 1927, p 894

[22] The contents of the twelve letters are disclosed and quotations given from them by kind permission of the administrators of the Berg collection

Bath letter had come into his possession "a few years ago" but that he could not (doubtless because of the contents) "send it to Shelley's immediate representatives" On June 7, in a follow-up note, he informed Spencer Shelley that he "meant him to keep the letter" (there is no evidence that he *sold* it to Spencer Shelley) and stated that the probability was that it was duly delivered in 1816 and that in 1859 it was accidentally "put into the post at Bath"

Thereupon Spencer Shelley sent a copy of it to Lady Shelley for her opinion She replied from Boscombe on June 9, 1867 that it was

> the true copy word for word from the original which is in our possession, and from which forgeries have been made three times over [This statement reveals that Lady Shelley knew of *four* exemplars—her own, which she called "original"—and three forgeries] Mrs Shelley [Mary] left this letter locked up with others from Shelley in her desk at Marlow when they left for Italy Peacock who at that time lived at Marlow had the care of all things left behind and on Shelley's death Mrs Shelley sent for her desk and received it with the letters in it [this statement the letters of Shelley and Mary extant prove to be correct] but in the interval forgeries had been made of all these letters so wonderfully executed that even we cannot detect the fraud at once

Lady Shelley's account would push the forging of Shelley letters back to a period between 1817 and 1823; actually, the first forging of Shelley letters must be dated 1845-1846, when Major Byron had his chance to sell letters to Mary through Hookham. The "original" which Lady Shelley had in her possession was the letter sold by the forger to Hookham, who bought it for Mary Our discussion above has already pointed out that there were at least three "waves" of letters which thus passed from the forger to Mary, the December 15-16 letter was one of these, a "copy" sold to Mary and kept by her with no notation that it was not a genuine original. Here in Mary's collection were also the five letters from the Hodges (1848) sale Sir Percy and Lady Shelley, therefore, as their bequests prove, had duplicate forgeries, word for word those from Mary's desk and those which they say they had themselves twice purchased. Lady Shelley continues:

> Twice have forgeries of these very letters been brought to us and twice we have bought them.
>
> The original is not written on a sheet of paper, and is not signed with his full name – he never signed his name in writing to his wife – only his initials or – "Elf". [yet she says presently her original is signed "Shelley"]. The watermark in the paper of some of these forgeries bears a later date than the letters [This sentence shows that the Shelleys were still keeping the forged letters in 1867]
>
> It is most mysterious I cannot think that Peacock did it himself, because he was always most anxious to suppress the truth

> conveyed in this letter for various reasons of his own – He was quite capable of it, or of taking the letter altogether had he known of its contents – and if he had done anything he would have destroyed it – besides, his conceit would not allow him to think that Shelley's letters could be of value – whilst so great a man as Peacock lived and wrote – Shelley was only to be plundered and made use of for the benefit of the said great individual

This diatribe against Peacock, which is wholly irrelevant here, is a forerunner of her accusation of his responsibility for Shelley's trouble with Harriet Lady Shelley wrote into her twelve copies of *Shelley and Mary* (1882) the monstrous charge that Harriet was Peacock's mistress—an accusation which she said Hogg told her, but which Dowden and Garnett would not allow her to print, and which no Shelley biographer has ever accepted Lady Shelley was particularly incensed at Peacock in 1867 because he had recently been engaged in heated controversy with Dr Garnett in defense of Harriet, and was maintaining that the family had no letters which would prove Harriet unfaithful to Shelley Dr Garnett in reply to Peacock was the first to disclose that the family did have such letters by quoting the passage partly torn by the seal, from the same Wise letter He could hardly have suspected it a forgery or he certainly would not have quoted from it. Lady Shelley continues

> About a year after Mrs Shelley's death [three and one-half months – Mary died February 1, the sale was May 12, 1851] a forgery of this letter and two or three others [eleven in 1851] were offered for sale at a public auction Hookham wrote to us thinking they were genuine – and we paid 60 guineas for them [auction price £57 15s] – every one were forgeries, but true copies nevertheless for on examining Mrs Shelley's papers some years later a sealed packet marked "Shelley letters" was found to contain amongst others the originals of those we had purchased at so high a price and the watermark bore the date of 1826 [the watermark of the Bath letter, according to Mrs Spencer Shelley's letter of June 21, is 1814] four years after Shelley's death

This is essentially the same story Lady Shelley told Maud Rolleston in *Talks with Lady Shelley,* (1925, p 122) It seems to us a curious mixture of fact and fiction There is no evidence of forged Shelley letters in existence until Major Byron began his activities with the Shelley family in 1845, and no reason why anyone should have forged copies of the letters in Shelley and Mary's Marlow desk between 1817 and 1823 when such letters had no market value for anyone The Peacock desk story was lifted out of Shelley's correspondence by Major Byron or he learned it elsewhere so he could account

for Shelley letters, real or forged, in his possession References to this desk, for which Percy and Mary waited eagerly and which Mary did not receive from England until after the poet's death, may be found in Ingpen, Julian X, pp 34, 244, 270, 286, 328, Jones, *Letters of Mary Shelley, passim.*

On June 11th, after Spencer Shelley had informed Tilley that Lady Shelley had pronounced the letter a forgery, Tilley reiterated the belief of the post office that the letter was posted again in 1859 by mistake and sent to Bath when "cannot be found" was written on it, then sent to the Dead Letter Office and brought to him He added that if, as Lady Shelley asserted, it was a forgery, "the postmarks of 1859 had to be explained away"

On June 23 Lady Shelley wrote again from Boscombe to Spencer Shelley that she had read over the copy of the letter that he had sent and compared it "with the original which is written on three sheets of note paper—it is word for word the same excepting that in the original there is a word left out—it is signed 'Shelley'—no P. B—and this of course would not do for a forgery" (On the contrary, every critic who has examined Lady Shelley's so-called "original" on three sheets of note paper, which she gave to the Bodleian in 1892 [Ms Shelley, c 1, ff, 135-138] has declared it is not in Shelley's hand Wise and Ingpen call it a copy, De Ricci and Grylls, a forgery)

Spencer Shelley kept the Bath letter along with Tilley's and Lady Shelley's correspondence concerning it until his death on March 10, 1908 at the age of ninety-four, when his wife, Susanna (or Susan) Shelley, aged eighty-four, found it among his papers and wrote to Mr Charles Bell of the Bodleian, who referred her to H Buxton Forman as a possible purchaser On May 22 she inquired of Forman and on the 31st wrote him again that through her nephew, Mr. Richard Edgecumbe, she had been offered £20 for it In the *Athenaeum* for August 29, 1908 (pages 241-242), Mr Edgecumbe, having read the Bath letter, made it the basis for a defense of Harriet and an attack on Dowden, stating that Dowden's version was from "a mangled copy"; he also closed with some veiled criticism of the Boscombe coterie's treatment of the Harriet story Mrs Spencer Shelley maintained to Forman that the letter must be genuine since it had never been delivered, and that Shelley's letter could hardly be a forgery because it "was never out of the possession of the post office until Mr. Tilley gave it to my husband" Considering, however, that Mrs Spencer Shelley was eighty-four years of age, and had not yet discovered the Tilley-Lady Shelley letters of 1867, and, as she says, was totally blind, having to dictate her correspondence, we may pardon her for being somewhat confused in her defense of this letter, which she naturally hoped was authentic.

On receiving a favorable reply from Forman, Mrs Spencer Shelley on June 4 sent him word that her daughter, Mrs. Dent, would be happy to show the letter to him some day after June 11. She added that since

the letter bears the postmarks of 1859, it could not have been lost by Mary Shelley who died in 1851—another confused and shaky argument

By June 21, however, when she had found Tilley's and Lady Shelley's correspondence, she wrote Forman immediately apprising him of their contents Against Lady Shelley she argued that Tilley must have been a judge of postmarks She questioned Lady Shelley's purported original on the grounds that letters written to go through the post in 1816 would not have been written·

> on 3 or 4 [Lady Shelley wrote "three"] sheets of *Note* paper I can remember the days of franking and the shoals of letters which my Father who was private secretary to both Lord Grey and Lord Melbourne used to frank and in those days no one wrote on *Note* paper

Mrs Spencer Shelley did not know the ways of Major Byron

Before Forman ventured on purchase, however, he endeavored to check on the letter by writing the following letter to Edward Dowden on June 25, 1908·

> 46 M H &c
> 25 June 1908
>
> My dear Dowden,
>
> I wonder whether you can charge your memory as to the precise nature of the sources from which the text of Shelley's letter to Mary about the death of Harriet was drawn The letter appears at pp 68-9 of your second volume, where you note that it must have been dated 15th instead of 16th of December 1816 by mistake The holograph which actually passed through the post & has the Bath postmark is dated the 16th, and varies from your text, apart from the omission of the passage about Eliza which follows the words "barren of good" The editing is more free than you would have permitted yourself with the holograph before you, but not than Jane Lady Shelley or even Mary herself might have ventured on, or than other editors of the first half of last century would have regarded as permissible
>
> It therefore seems to me likely that your source was the book "Shelley & Mary", which I have never seen; but if you had a copy by Mary or someone else I should be greatly obliged by your telling me about it
>
> I hope you are flourishing like a green bay-tree
>
> Yours sincerely
> HBF

This letter of Forman's is significant, he shows no suspicion that the handwriting is a forgery, he thinks it may be the letter which Lady Shelley or Mary edited, he does not realize that Dowden derived his text from the other forged version, which Lady Shelley received from Mary, printed in her *Shelley and Mary,* and subsequently presented to the Bodleian Moreover, his statement that as late as June 25, 1908, he had never seen Lady Shelley's book, *Shelley and Mary,* indicates how closely copies of it were still held

Dowden replied the next day as follows

Highfield House
Highfield Road, Rathgar
Dublin

June 26 1908

My dear Forman,

I quite forget, but I am confident I cannot have seen the original, for I should have followed it – The variations of the text in my *Life* from that in *Shelley and Mary* are so trivial that they may have been made in transcription Probably I printed from the book, but it is just possible I may have seen some almost identical copy I am now unable to say whether Lady S printed from an incorrect copy or had the original before her

I flourish like a very brown bay-tree, & in a few days hope to be at some seaside place, perhaps in Kerry I hope all goes well with you

Sincerely yours
E Dowden[23]

His reply reveals, what examination also proves, that Dowden took his version from Lady Shelley's printed text, and that Lady Shelley for obvious reasons did not show him the forged manuscript. Neither he nor Forman was aware that there were two forged versions which account for the variants—Mary's of 1846, signed *Shelley,* as reprinted by Lady Shelley, and with omissions by Dowden, and the other of 1851, signed *P B Shelley.* On July 2 Mrs Spencer Shelley received Forman's offer of £21 and acknowledged a cheque for this sum in a final settlement dated July 6, 1908

It is questionable whether the problems of this letter through all these mazes of questions, conjectures, and transfers will ever be completely unravelled, but it will be helpful in view of these complications to place in parallel columns the course of both of these letters, the Wise and the Lady Shelley versions.

[23] We are indebted to Sgt C V Rutan for kind permission to quote these letters from his Shelley collection

LETTER OF DECEMBER 16, 1816

Wise Version I

Four pages quarto with address Mrs Shelley, 12 New Bond Street, Bath

1 Fabricated by Major G Byron (*c* 1846-8)
2 Sold to White, *c* 1848
3 White sold it to Sotheby, August, 1850.
4 Sold at Sotheby's, May 12, 1851, to Hookham for
5 Sir Percy Florence Shelley, who declared it a forgery
6 Garnett refers to it in *Shelley Memorials,* 1859, and later quotes passage from it to refute Peacock
7 Reposted in London, postmarked March 29, 1859
8 Received two Bath postmarks, 1859, March 30, and April [?]
9 Sent to Dead Letter Office
10 Delivered to John Tilley "some years ago", before 1867
11 Given to Spencer Shelley by Tilley June 7, 1867
12 Sold to H Buxton Forman by Mrs Spencer Shelley on July 2, 1908
13 Subsequently transferred by Forman in exchange to Thomas J Wise
14 Photo-facsimiled by Wise for *Ashley Library* and *A Shelley Library,* 1924
15 Now in Wise collection, British Museum
16 Declared by Wise to be the genuine original, 1927
17 Declared by De Ricci to be in Shelley's autograph, 1927.
18 Differs from Lady Shelley's version (a) an extra sentence at top of page one (b) no affectionate complimentary close, signed
"P. B Shelley"

Lady Shelley Version II

Three sheets of note paper octavo without address called by her the "original".

1 Fabricated by Major G Byron (*c* 1845-6)
2 Sold to Mary Shelley through Hookham, 1845-6
3 Kept by Mary Shelley in her desk at Field Place in packet marked "Shelley letters"
4 Discovered in Mary's desk by Lady Shelley a year after Mary's death
5 Proclaimed the "original" by Lady Shelley in letter to Spencer Shelley, (1867)
6 First printed by Lady Shelley in *Shelley and Mary,* 1882.
7 Text with omissions printed by Dowden, 1886
8 Presented by Lady Shelley to Bodleian in 1892
9 Called by Wise and Ingpen, "a copy", by Grylls and De Ricci, "a forgery"
10 Differs (a) from Garnett's conjectural reading of Wise's version at place torn by seal
(b) in appropriate affectionate close and signature
"Your own affectionate
Shelley"

From this survey of the provenance certain facts, which now seem clear, must be kept firmly in mind

1 That both the Wise and the Lady Shelley versions of this letter are Major Byron forgeries, though each has been proclaimed "the original" Neither is in Shelley's autograph

2 That there is only one four-page letter dated December 16, 1816 in existence bearing both 1816 and 1859 postmarks, Lady Shelley's purported "original" is on three sheets of note paper (octavo)

3 That Lady Shelley pronounced the Wise letter a forgery in 1867, while Tilley believed it to be genuine—postmarks and all

4 That Forman, in spite of Lady Shelley's charge against it as a forgery, concluded, after consulting Dowden, to give £1 more than Edgecumbe for it

5 That Wise was in error in stating (1) that he acquired the letter of Forman in 1899 and (2) that it had been in his possession twenty-eight years, for the records show that Forman did not buy it until July 1908, and, therefore, passed it to Wise in exchange after that date, and without the accompanying correspondence by Tilley in favor, and by Lady Shelley against, its genuineness. This correspondence, which Wise never saw, was in Forman's sale in 1920

6. That it is particularly ironic to observe Wise stoutly defending his letter as genuine and original by asserting that it was once in the possession of Sir Percy Florence Shelley, who had pronounced it a forgery in 1852, while Lady Shelley had repeatedly called it a forgery in 1867

7 That Forman's purchase, and Wise's and De Ricci's declarations that the letter is in Shelley's autograph, do not cast a favorable light upon them as experts in Shelley's chirography

After a checkered provenance like this, it would be a rash buyer who would follow Forman's example and wager £21 on its authenticity It is curious that Tilley, who believed the postmarks genuine, did not recall the postal regulations at that time which, as Graham Pollard explains, this letter grossly violates, nor did he note the lack of an adhesive stamp, also required at that date.

Two Other Forgeries of the Letter

Since Lady Shelley declared that this letter had been *three* times forged we may well pass now to an examination of two other versions on record

This letter was one that Major Byron found profitable to reproduce in parts and wholes and in varied forms He not only succeeded in selling to Mary the Lady Shelley exemplar in 1846, and the Wise copy in 1851 to Sir Percy, but he fabricated another—three pages quarto—which Sir Robert Peel bought in 1850, it passed at the sale of his heirlooms at Robinson and

Fisher's, May 15, 1900 [catalogue p 75, no 945] for $21 00 to Sabin. A fourth, also three pages quarto, appeared at a "Country Gentleman's" sale [De Ricci, *op cit* p 244] at Sotheby's, March 31, 1875 [p 62, no 467] and also passed to Sabin for £3 3 0 "Probably passed into the Frederickson collection and may well be his forged transcript of the letter of 15 (16) December 1816", was later printed as genuine by Harry B Smith in *A Sentimental Library,* who bought it at the Frederickson sale with one other for $7 50, and in the fall of 1943 was purchased, as an acknowledged Major Byron forgery from the Rosenbach Company, for Lehigh University's Shelley collection

This record of four forgeries tallies with Lady Shelley's pronouncement that the letter had been forged "three times over", two of which forgeries the Shelley family had purchased

No one will seriously contend, we trust, that Shelley on that hectic Monday evening wrote all of these versions of this letter We regret that opportunity does not permit a variorum treatment of them all.

If, however, we take the one at hand—the Lehigh copy—and compare it with the Wise version, we shall see that they are, as the provenance has revealed, the work not of Shelley but of the forger Both copies contain, in similar hand, the date, December 1816, but the Wise letter has December 15, 1816, the Lehigh, just December 1816 The Wise "December 15," though, has been tampered with and changed from "15" to "16" Why is this? Because someone later discovered that since Shelley was in Bath and traveling on the 15th to London, he could not have written the purported letter until the 16th

If you will now examine the beginning of each letter, you will find the identical opening sentence "I have spent a day, my beloved, of somewhat agonizing sensations" Then follows in the Lehigh letter a carefully constructed mosaic of sentences on Platonic love culled from Shelley's essays, *On Love,* and *On the Literature, the Arts, and the Manners of the Athenians,* which Moxon had published in 1840 This was one of Major Byron's common practices, as we have demonstrated, in his other Shelley forgeries

At the close of the Lehigh letter Platonic love suddenly disappears, and the two texts begin to resemble each other again

In the Lehigh letter: "Do you dearest and best seek happiness in your own pure bosom"

In the Wise letter· "Do you dearest and best seek happiness—where it ought to reside in your own pure and perfect bosom"

In the Lehigh letter "Darling William—kiss his blue eyes!"

In the Wise letter "Darling William, too! My eyes overflow with tears" Had De Ricci known the composite character of the Lehigh letter, he would not have conjectured (p 239) that an original of it was in a private American collection

Major Byron derived this phrase of Shelley's from a Shelley letter (August 23, 1818) which has as its postscript "Kiss the blue-eyed darlings for me and don't let William forget me," a letter the Major found in Mary Shelley's *Essays, Letters from Abroad,* etc , volume II, page 138—a source of much of his forged material.

Finally, if the style of these letters may justly be called by Mr Blunden "singularly simpering, weak, and wandering" we may account for it on the grounds that Major Byron, and not Shelley, was their composer.

Handwriting Evidences

We may now proceed with an examination of the holograph text It must be observed that the letter is given, even by Wise, in two variant versions the holograph reproduction as over against his printed text The holograph, for example, has the words "yet" (page 1, line 8) and "that" (page 1, line 11) clearly visible, but neither of these appears in Wise's printed version "Messages," the last word of the holograph, is printed as "message" by Wise and subsequent editors [24]

There are two deletions, or words stricken out, which suggest that the forger may have made mistakes in the careful copying of his prepared text "form" (page 2, line 13) and "I had" or "that" (page 4, third line from bottom) In his haste the forger failed in one sentence to include a part of the verb and wrote (page 3, line 19) "I not recommend her to your care," to which Wise adds the conjectural word "need."

At the end of the fourth page, where the letter would normally have ended, the forger ran out of room• He had begun a new sentence with the part-word "Tomor" which he had to break in two, adding "row" at the very base of the page, on a line by itself. Thus far the forger had begun the last sentence as Dowden prints it (II, page 69)· "Tomorrow I will write again" But the forger had no space in which to finish the sentence or even to sign Shelley's name at the base of page 4 Hence he went back to the top of the first page to conclude the letter, deviating from the text as given by Dowden. Having added the words "write a long letter, & give me some answer to Hunt's messages," he had no room for an affectionate close—which we would naturally expect in an intimate letter to Mary—but only for the signature, which he inserted as the formal "P. B Shelley."[25]

[24] *The Ashley Library. A Catalogue collected by Thomas James Wise* London, Printed for private circulation only, 1924 Volume V, p 25 Ingpen, in the Julian edition of Shelley's Letters, volume X, p 424, says "The original is in the possession of Mr T J Wise, who has kindly allowed me to collate it" But Ingpen also omits these two words and misreads the third, in his editing of the letter, White quotes from Ingpen

[25] The Dowden version reads. "Your own affectionate Shelley"

Examining the portion of the letter containing the address, we note that there is no adhesive stamp on the letter, as there should have been if the letter actually went through the mails in 1859 The "M" in "Mrs" has obviously been doctored by the forger, who no doubt forgot himself when he began the first stroke of the "M" and did not make it as tall as he should have, it then became necessary for him to draw a larger stroke at the left This he did, but the result is clearly botched, nothing like the smooth-flowing "M" which is one of Shelley's characteristic letters

The word "Shelley" in the address does not possess the extreme slant that a genuine Shelley signature has Shelley's signatures slant to the right at an angle of about 47 to 48 degrees, whereas this forged "Shelley" slants at only 44 or 45 degrees The "y" at the end of the word does not have a long, curved tail in any of Shelley's authentic signatures, but this "y" curves down and around to the left almost to the "h" of "Shelley." There are two different types of "B" used on the address page, neither of them like Shelley's, the ornate one used in "Bath" is so far removed from Shelley's own style as to offer no real comparison.

The signature, on page 1, offers special problems The "P" is made differently from the way Shelley made his the loop at the bottom of the letter is rarely to be found in his signatures The "B" is too short and fat and possesses not enough slant to be one of Shelley's, indeed, it is almost vertical The bottom loop of the "S" swings around and over to the right, at most, the loop in Shelley's "S" swings to an upright position, though it more often points to the left, not looping at all The final "y" of the "Shelley" has a type of tail not usually to be found in Shelley's signatures. These remarks also apply to the signature on the Lehigh letter Compare these signatures with that on the genuine letter of July 17,.1816, here reproduced

In the "London" on the same page, the height of the "o" is less than that of the first "n" which follows it, while in every instance where this word occurs on an undisputed Shelley document the height of this first "o" is always greater than that of the "n" immediately following.

There is much more to prove that this is not Shelley's hand. On the first page of this letter alone there are at least seventeen "g"s and "y"s with long sweeping tails running far to the left, in the body of the document alone Now Shelley did employ this form, but not so liberally, and usually only as a final letter, while three of these are not final letters Notice in contrast the very sparse use of these long sweeping tails in the genuine letter of July 17, 1816 [26]

[26] The original letter, here reproduced by permission, is owned by The Historical Society of Pennsylvania Readers who wish to compare the handwriting of Shelley in this letter with other genuine Shelley autographs are referred to *The Harvard Shelley Notebook* issued by G E Woodberry, which contains abundant samples, though sometimes erroneously assigned, of Mary Shelley's and of Shelley's chirography

If now you consider the body of the letter as a whole and compare it with the genuine letter here reproduced, you will at once notice the difference in general appearance Close observation reveals that the relative slant and proportions and spacing are all three different in the alleged letter to Mary from what they are in the Geneva letter of July 17, 1816 This is one of the surest indications that the letter is forged It is comparatively easy for a skilled forger to imitate letter forms and general proportions in a single word, or even a line of writing, but when he has to write line after line, always trying to imitate the letter forms, the slant and the proportions within each word, it is almost impossible at the same time to achieve a correct relationship between the lines and the paragraphs taken as a whole. And yet this alone would not prove it a forgery, but it is just another of the number of small facts, each separately unimportant, which are not right cumulatively for Shelley's style The sum is growing, and it becomes more and more difficult to understand why all of these things should have happened to Shelley's handwriting in one day, and in the space of one brief letter.

It will perhaps not be amiss to summarize here the case built up for Shelley and Mary by the forger in this letter, which skilfully purveys exactly what Mary and her Shelley relatives wished to establish

1) To show Shelley much upset by Harriet's death and still to indicate there was not too great a personal loss "Every thing tends to prove, however, that beyond the mere shock of so hideous a catastrophe having fallen on a human being once so nearly connected with me, there would, in any case have been little to regret"
2) To indicate Shelley's solicitude for and love of his children by Harriet
3) To absolve Shelley from all blame in Harriet's suicide "Hookham, Longdill—every one, does me full justice"
4) To put the blame for Harriet's death on the Westbrooks generally and on Eliza in particular "there is but one voice in condemnation of the detestable Westbrooks" and "by the murder of this poor creature"
5) To link Harriet Shelley with the Harriet Smith of the Hookham letter and with the inquest papers "she lived with a groom of the name of Smith"
6) To convict Harriet of prostitution and thus relieve Shelley of all blame "and descended the steps of prostitution"
7) To establish that Shelley's life with Mary had been a veritable heaven, and that Shelley was most eager to marry Mary "I told him that I was under contract of marriage to you" and "at least it is consoling to know that if the contest should arise it would have its termination in your nominal union with me—that after having blessed me with

a life a world of real happiness, a mere form appertaining to you will not be barren of good"

8) To prove Shelley's great love for Mary "Do you dearest and best seek happiness—where it ought to reside in your own pure and perfect bosom, in the thoughts of how dear and good you are to me"

In conclusion we would emphasize again the following main points in our contention that the December 15-16, 1816 letters are Major Byron forgeries

I Shelley's friendly letter to Eliza Westbrook of December 18, 1816, absolving her of all blame, disproves his hatred of her as a murderess displayed in this letter of two days before

II Shelley did not use the charge of infidelity and prostitution against Harriet in the Chancery suit, a charge which would have weighed heavily in his favor

III The texts of these letters are numerous and varied; and all known copies are by their origin, provenance and handwriting, forgeries

IV The letter, with its 1859 postmarks, bears evidence of additional tampering to create a false provenance

V The false statements of Wise do not increase our confidence. Seymour de Ricci's statements are so contradictory that we judge the later ones are made in the heat of controversy and in forgetfulness of what he had written ten years before

VI The marked discrepancies in the handwriting of these letters when they are compared with genuine specimens of Shelley's handwriting are inexplicable except on the basis of forgery.

Additional Evidence as to Identification of the Forger of the Bath (Wise) Letter of December 16 and Other Forgeries

The return to the New York Public Library of the documents which had been sent away for safe-keeping when the war began has made available for inspection some letters which make possible the identification of one of the forgers of the Shelley papers

Before we take up the problem in detail, a few words on this subject are necessary. It is much easier to point out that a certain document is a forgery than to tell who did the forging The former is proved when it is shown that in a large amount of genuine writing certain characteristics which frequently appear in the forgeries are not present, or that unusual forms appearing in the genuine writing only in certain combinations of letters, or particular places in words, are present in the wrong locations in the suspected writing

When we consider the question of the identity of the forger it is of course obvious that in closely copying the hand of another he will have suppressed many of his own characteristics, and that the better his imitation, the less it will resemble his own script It is for this reason that many times in our courts a document is proved to be a forgery to the satisfaction of judge and jury, and is thus prevented from being used to accomplish its purpose, without any attempt to show who did the actual forging In New York State Courts, a person is guilty of forgery if he knowingly utters a forged instrument (That is, if he tries to make use of it, even though he may have had nothing to do with its production)

My colleagues in this work have shown from evidence given in another part of this book that a man named De Gibler and calling himself "George Byron" had forged many of these Shelley papers However, until a certain letter became recently available for study there was little handwriting evidence which would link him with the forgery His natural hand is quite different from that of Shelley, as a glance at the cut of the "Portman Square" letter will reveal He wrote a very smooth, well-rounded, small, neat hand, totally unlike the vigorous, evenly sloped script of the poet

Through the courtesy of the New York Public Library, a cut of the letter which reveals the possibilities in the writing of "Byron" is printed in this volume It is a letter written to Hookham, dated November 12, 1845, and signed "G B —" The implications in the text of the letter are fully covered elsewhere in this book, and only the handwriting is considered here

First glance will show little resemblance between the writing of the Portman Square letter and this letter to Hookham, but a closer scrutiny will soon convince one that both were written by the same person (Byron had reason to disguise his hand in this note)

Both the Portman Square letter and that to Hookham are dated, and in the date of each are the figures "18", note that the formation of the 8's is alike and that in each case the 1 and the 8 are joined by a slanting line between them

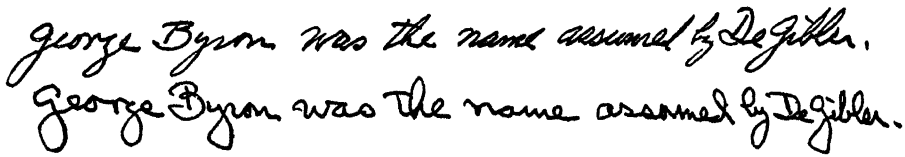
Keeping in mind that the Hookham letter is a disguised hand and making allowances for the alteration in the forms of letters which takes place when the slant is changed, note the word "London" in each and observe the similarity of the two open-top "o's" in each word Look at the form of the "2's" in "2,000" and in "20" on the first page of the Portman Square letter and then see how closely they resemble the "2" in the date of the "Hookham" letter. The letters "ir" in the word "Sir" at the beginning of each letter resemble each other so closely that they might almost have come from a rubber-stamp, except for the difference in the slant.

The word "you", last word, last line on 2nd page of the Hookham letter, when compared with the same word as it appears on the 2nd page, 5th line, 3rd word of the Portman Square letter will further convince the

observer that only one person is the writer of both letters, and a glance at "full", the 2nd word of the 2nd line on the 2nd page of the Hookham letter as compared with the same word in the Portman Square letter on the 2nd page, 4th line, last word should add to this conviction

Experience has taught those who have examined quantities of anonymous letters that the most common method of attempted disguise of handwriting is the alteration in the slant Consequently much experimentation has been carried on to determine how this alteration affects writing characteristics If any reader seriously wishes to learn about this, the following experiments are suggested

Write "George Byron was the name assumed by De Gibler" in rapid, free, right hand slant, and then, beneath this, repeat the sentence in backhand or left-hand slant



Notice that all the loops (tails on the "g's", "y's", top loops on "h's" and "l's") are more open (wider) in the backhand slant than in the right-hand slant The space between letters in many cases is greater in the backhand script, between the "o" and "r" in "George" and the "a" and "s" of "was", for example Sharp angles at top or bottom of letters in the right-hand slant often become arcs or else less acute angles, note the connection between the "t" and "h" of "the" and also between the "r" and "o" of "Byron" The relative heights of the tall letters as compared with the short letters still remain unchanged, as do the basic style of the letters and method of connecting them together

Mr Albert S Osborn, one of the first to apply scientific methods to the study of handwriting characteristics and the author of the best work on the subject, *Questioned Documents,* made extensive experiments and discovered that a considerable number of people are afflicted with "Form Blindness", that is, they are unable to select from a large number of samples bearing some likeness to each other the ones which are identical If a number of angles are drawn on a piece of paper varying from each other by a few degrees, except for one pair, these persons cannot select the two which are the same Persons so afflicted would be unable to piece together a jig-saw puzzle if it were turned bottom up so that there was no picture to guide them. Unfortunately, most people who have this defect are not aware of it and so are often very positive when it comes to the question of comparing specimens of handwriting, and will frequently be most dogmatic in their asser-

tions that a certain writing is totally unlike (or exactly like) another, when it is clearly apparent to persons without this defect that the statement is not true Should you care to test yourself, Mr Osborn has recently brought out another book entitled, *Questioned Document Problems,* in which a series of prepared charts will make it possible to learn whether or not you can identify small differences in forms, and if you can select actual pairs from a number of samples. Those who can pass these tests may feel themselves qualified to study the specimens reproduced in this book, read the arguments advanced, and decide for themselves whether or not they agree with the conclusions expressed

It is unfortunate that "cuts", which have to be used to print photographs of handwriting in a book, add much to the cost of publication. This makes it necessary to limit the display of the writing which has been studied and compared, and makes it impossible for the reader to have all of the knowledge that the author has of the variations in the script under scrutiny Here, for example, the Portman Square letter has been offered to show the writing of George Byron, yet it is merely a sample of what might be termed his "social style" Reproduced here is another style which Byron used, including his signature At first glance it seems very unlike the writing in the Portman Square letter, but on comparison of the "I's", the final "y's" ("humbly", 3rd page, last word in 4th line of the Portman Square letter, with "sincerely", last word above the signature in this sample) and the "Byron" in the signature on each, the likeness will become apparent. Bear in mind that the Portman Square letter and this paragraph from another letter are both known to be in Byron's writing and the comparisons are being made solely to show what characteristics persist regardless of the style used Note the word "yet" as it appears in the 4th line, 1st page of the body of the Portman Square letter and then observe the same word in the 2nd line of the paragraph just mentioned. The form of the "y", its manner of connection with the "e", the lack of a loop on either "e" and the exact duplication of the spacing and shape of the opening between the "e" and "t" are so evident that there should be no doubt in the observer's mind

Now compare this signed paragraph with the letter of November 12, 1845, and first note the word "be" in the 2nd line of the paragraph and the same word on the 1st page of the letter in the 6th line, (last word). Remember what has been shown about the change produced by an alteration of the slant of the letters, and observe that the "b" in the paragraph is of the same construction, but being slanted to the right instead of being vertical as is the "b" in the November 12 letter, the half-circle which forms the base is wider in the vertical style. In each case, however, the word might well be taken for "lu" instead of "be". The "I" at the beginning of the letter and the one which starts the paragraph are not only alike in form, but in each case they are larger than the same letter where it appears later on in the sentence

The "B" of "Byron" in both the letter and the paragraph is not only similar in construction, but the relative proportions between the various parts are alike in each case

The "t's" in the words "but" and "yet" in the paragraph clearly show their relationship to the "t's" in the words "but" (2nd page, 2nd line of letter) and "prevent" (1st page, last line of letter) with their heavily shaded turned-up tails and heavy cross bars

Being now supplied with three examples of script of "George Byron" or De Gibler, if you prefer to call him that, let us see if there are any of his characteristics in the writing of the forged "Bath" letter which has been analyzed in a previous chapter Since the forger, whether Byron or another, must produce a letter whose script resembles that of Shelley, it naturally follows that many of the outstanding and obvious characteristics will resemble Shelley's hand more than they do that of the forger The points wherein they differ from Shelley's hand have already been pointed out, and it will be among these differences that we may hope to find some of the forger's own characteristics

The slant of the Bath letter writing is by no means so constant as that of Shelley's script, and what has been pointed out above as to differences of slant in Byron's writings is all consistent with his authorship of this letter

The word "Shelley" as it appears in the signature "P B Shelley" at the top of the first page of the Bath letter is very similar to the same name as it appears in "Mrs Shelley" in the letter to Hookham, next to last line, 1st page Save for a difference of slant the likeness is pronounced

Note that the word "I" at the beginning of the Bath letter is formed like the same letter at the beginning of the Hookham letter and also in the paragraph from the other "Byron" letter, and that it is also larger than the same letter when it is used later on in the same letter This is also a Byron characteristic

Note, in the Portman Square letter, that the long tails on letters like "y" and "g" show a variety of shapes and lengths which is similar to their variations in the Bath letter (and not at all like their use by Shelley), including the use of such tails in the interior of words, as, the "y" in "paying", next to last word of last line on page 2 of Portman Square letter, and the "g" in "right" which is the 3rd word in the 2nd line of same letter compare with the "g" in "weight", 2nd word, 7th line, 1st page of the body of the Bath letter, and the closely curved tail of the "y" in the word "you", 4th word, 1st line, 2nd page of Bath letter Also compare this last example from the Bath letter with the "Y" of "Your" in the "Your most obedient and humble servant" at the close of the Portman Square letter

In both the Bath letter and the Portman Square letter the word "you" appears in two distinct forms, as in the 5th word, 6th line, 1st page of the Bath letter, and the 3rd word, 5th line, 2nd page of the Portman Square

letter, where the "y" is joined to the "o" and has no long, curved tail, then it is seen with the curved tail as cited above. As already pointed out in another chapter, Shelley did not use this form at the beginning or in the interior of a word, his curved tail "y" was strictly a terminal letter, and his tails are very uniform in construction

The "12" in the address on the cover of the Bath letter, "12 New Bond Street", and the "12" in the date of the "G B" letter, "November 12, 1845", are so much alike that even a person afflicted with form blindness would concede that they look alike And the "2" of either of these is certainly very similar to the "2" in "20", next to last word, 10th line, 1st page of the Portman Square letter.

It would seem logical that, when so many characteristics of the forger show through the disguise which he is weaving in his attempt to imitate the script of the great poet, it should be assumed that George Byron (De Gibler) was the one responsible for the penmanship of the Bath letter, and this is the opinion of the writer. Still, it must be borne in mind that this conclusion is not entitled to the weight of the earlier conclusion, that the Bath letter is not in Shelley's script. I am quite certain that no handwriting expert of repute will disagree with my finding that the Bath letter is a forgery, but it is possible that some expert might feel that there was not sufficient evidence to make the authorship of George Byron (De Gibler) equally sure, though I do feel that he would concede the probability

Although the writer does not take into consideration any factors other than the actual handwriting characteristics, it is right that the reader should consider the factors which my colleagues have compiled in regard to this matter before making up their minds.

There is in existence a letter which begins with the same words as the Bath letter It is owned by Lehigh University and is very evidently a forgery It is not by any means as well executed as the Bath letter and the comparison with Shelley's writing, made elsewhere in this volume, leaves no doubt that it is a fake A few moments spent in comparison will make it quite clear that the forger of the Bath letter also prepared this imitation. First, note the large "I" at the beginning of the letter, a characteristic of Byron (De Gibler) and also evident in the Bath letter Second, observe the free use of the long curving tails on the "g's" and "y's" not only at the ends of words but freely scattered about inside and even at the beginnings, a trait of the forger

The heading "London" and the abbreviation "Dec" on the Lehigh letter is very similar to that of the Bath letter The first sentence is not only the same in the choice of words, but in duplication of the letter forms; note the separation of the word "agonizing" in each letter and also that of "sensations", as well as that in the other words of this sentence.

It is the 2nd page of the Lehigh "fake" which shows the most resemblance to the forger's own script It is here that we get the wide variations in the long tails, including at least two with the "fish-hook" curve similar to several in the Portman Square letter Also, this page shows many examples of the extra long crossing of the "t" which appears in the November 12th letter as well

There are two other points which are of great importance, though to the layman they may seem very trivial In the short paragraph which bears the signature "George Byron", in the November 12th letter, in Byron's letter addressed to Curtis (mentioned elsewhere), in the Bath letter and in the Lehigh letter much use is made of long dashes between sentences or after a word or paragraph, and also the form of the comma is a long, upright dash in all of these writings It is true that Shelley did both of these things to some extent, but, as with the long tails on the "y's" and "g's", the forger is much too profuse with the dashes and long commas Look at the cuts of the Godwin letters, and of that to Miss Clairmont (shown following page 290) and then compare them with those mentioned above and the difference in usage will be obvious This is such a minor detail that it is probable the forger did not consider it more than to observe that Shelley occasionally did these things and that be might safely continue to follow his own habit

Whether the Lehigh letter was a bit of practice before writing the Bath letter, or whether it was started by copying the already completed epistle in order to produce a manuscript for sale to some collector, will probably never be known, but there can be little doubt as to their close relationship

Mary's Reply of December 17, 1816

Mary's reply of December 17 offers another argument upon which Professor White lays great stress It is to him the clinching argument that the December 16 letter is genuine

> It seems to have occurred to no one that if this letter, dated either December 15 or 16, is a forgery, it could hardly have been answered by Mary Shelley on December 17 Yet Mary Shelley's letter of that date clashes in no detail with the alleged forgery, and the Chancery references in both letters dovetail perfectly This letter first published in 1886 [1882 in *Shelley and Mary*], could hardly have been used in 1859 or earlier in fabricating a forged letter to which it would be the authenticating "reply" [27]

There is, however, one point damaging to Professor White's dovetailing argument, for we must ask to which forged version is Mary's the reply? The

[27] Newman Ivey White *Shelley* New York, Knopf, 1940 Volume I, page 723

Mary-Lady Shelley-*Shelley and Mary* forged version, which Dowden printed with omissions and which, we have shown, differs markedly from the Wise forged variant in the closing lines, reads

> My eyes overflow with tears Tomorrow I will write again
> Your own affectionate
> Shelley

Certainly, if there is or was a genuine original back of these varying forgeries (and no critic can so assume without proof), this close is the more natural and convincing But this version, as we have shown, is the one on Lady Shelley's "three sheets of Note paper", in the Bodleian, which has been pronounced a fabrication by every scholar who has examined it

If this is the original text, Mary would hardly have replied on the 17th, but would have waited until she had received the next letter Shelley promised to write on that very day Mary's reply, moreover, dovetails not with this Lady Shelley-Dowden version, but with the Wise forgery, which ends abruptly on the last page with the word "Tomorrow", the close of the letter being continued at the top of page one with the additional sentence and the formal signature

> Write a long letter, & give me some answer to Hunt's messages.
> P B Shelley

Professor White is, therefore, in the position where he must explain how it is that Mary answered the forged variant, written with no affectionate close and abruptly signed "P B Shelley"—a form of signature that under these circumstances Shelley would scarcely have used to Mary. In fact, one of the major differences between forged Shelley letters and genuine ones, as Lady Shelley tells us[28] and as Marianna Hunt confirms[29] is that Shelley's letters to his intimates are usually signed with his nickname "Elf", or "S", or "P B S" or some other intimate abbreviation, whereas forgers usually write either "P.B. Shelley" or "Percy B. Shelley" or spell all these names out in full.[30]

[28] Rolleston, Maud *Talks with Lady Shelley* London, Harrap (1925), pages 123-124

[29] Brewer, Luther A *My Leigh Hunt Library* Iowa City, Iowa, University of Iowa, 1938, page 285

[30] A statistical count of Shelley signatures in Ingpen's three volumes of Shelley letters reveals Shelley's practice.

P B Shelley	206	Percy S	9
P B S	101	Percy B S	5
Percy B Shelley	85	Shelley	3
S	41	Percy	2
Percy Bysshe Shelley	30	P S	1
Percy Shelley	19		

In all of Ingpen's letters there is no signature "Elf" We can only conjecture that the "Elf" letters have been lost, suppressed, or destroyed

This link between Mary's reply and the forged close is found in Mary's last paragraph

> You tell me to write a long letter, and I would, but that my ideas wander and my hand trembles

This sentence, to reiterate, is an answer to the last sentence of the Wise forgery, not to the Dowden version in which Shelley promised to write again on the 17th, and which says nothing about Hunt's messages, while Mary's letter has "thank Mr H[unt] for his friendly message which I did not hear"[31]

Moreover, there is again a variant in the close of Mary's letter. As Dowden prints it, Mary writes

> Your affectionate
> Mary

The ending of this letter, according to the only extant manuscript, the one which Lady Shelley gave to the Bodleian [MS Shelley c 1 ff. 148-149], reads

> Your affectionate companion
> Mary W G[32]

These changes may be editorial ones introduced by Dowden laboring always with difficulty under the insistencies and transcripts of Lady Shelley Obviously Lady Shelley could hardly have accepted with composure Mary's signing herself for posterity as Shelley's "companion"

The Bodleian text in full included additional matter that puts Mary in a bad light Her vituperations against the Westbrooks are reiterated by the lines, omitted in *Shelley and Mary* and in Dowden, but given by Mr Hill

> Be resolute for Desse plainly wishes to procrastinate and make out a bill for his worthy patron How it would please me if old Westbrook were to repent in his last moments and leave all his fortunes away from that miserable and odious Eliza[33]

There is finally a further inconsistency in the content of the text How is it that in the first part of the letter Mary cannot see why Chancery has anything to do with Shelley's children by Harriet, while in the last sentence she is coaching Shelley about Westbrook's lawyer, Desse, as though she were experienced herself in legal processes of procrastination?

The authenticity of this letter, therefore, may remain suspect until the only extant manuscript version in the Bodleian can be subjected to a hand-

[31] Jones, Frederick L, *op cit*, I, 16-17

[32] Hill, R H (editor) *The Shelley Correspondence in the Bodleian Library* Oxford, 1926 page 11

[33] *Ibid*, pages 11-12

writing examination in order to disclose whether the autograph is Mary's or Major Byron's, or until a genuine original of the December 16th letter or of Mary's reply is brought to light Should it prove to be Mary's the question would then arise, did she write it in 1816, or 1845-50?

The Godwin Charges Against Harriet

Professor Newman I White, in his recent one-volume biography, *Portrait of Shelley* (as also in his larger work), makes the statement "It was here [in one of the arbors] that Shelley overcame Mary's reluctance to elope by assuring her that Harriet no longer loved him and was in fact an adulteress He even named her lover as a Major Ryan, a man whom they had met in Dublin and had seen since, occasionally, in London "

Before giving current sanction as fact to such a base belief about Shelley it would seem that Professor White was under obligation to disclose how flimsy and treacherous is the evidence that Shelley ever employed this scandal to persuade Mary Professor White himself finds this story incompatible with Shelley's declaration a fortnight before as to Harriet's nobility and fidelity.[34]

The Major Ryan story is incompatible because it is doubtful whether Shelley ever heard of it, at least until after the elopement, if then Moreover, like other similar accusations, it is wholly Godwinian in its origin and evidence, and the aftermath of the long and persistent efforts by the Godwins—Mary, and especially William and his wife, Mary's stepmother—to prove that Harriet was unfaithful to Shelley *before* he abandoned her If this dereliction could be established, Shelley's elopement and adultery with Mary and their subsequent marriage would have far more justification The Godwins seem to have left no stone unturned in their endeavors to establish this charge against Harriet, and it can hardly be said that Mary and her Shelley heirs ever did anything to discourage it

This effort of the Godwins is not difficult to understand, for both parents, especially Mrs. Godwin, were feverishly anxious to legitimatize as soon as possible, and in any way they could, the irregular relations of Mary and Percy Their reasons were legion Foremost was the possession of Shelley's estate. Godwin had already been dipping into Shelley's coffers before the elopement, and not until Shelley and Mary were married on December 30, some fifteen days after the news of Harriet's death came to Shelley, was Godwin finally reconciled to the wayward lovers Second, it was imperative that Mary's issue be legitimatized, for the Chancellor's formal order in the suit for Harriet's children was based on an allegation of the petitioners, baldly stated in words the Godwins and Shelleys would have liked to obliterate

[34] White, Newman Ivey, *Portrait of Shelley*, 1945, p 161

> . the said Percy Bysshe Shelley ever since he so deserted his said wife has unlawfully cohabited with the said Mary Godwin and is now unlawfully cohabiting with her and has several illegitimate children by her [35]

This had been the plain truth of the matter, up to December 30 when Shelley married Mary, and it was this statement which through after years had in some way to be lived down, glossed over, forgotten, or obliterated by calling attention to gross derelictions on the part of Harriet The forged letter of January 11 contains the charge that Godwin not only pressed upon Shelley, but spread in his own family and in other directions

But we must go back to the beginning of these Godwin scandal-mongerings We find them recorded in Henry Crabb Robinson's writings, which seem so far to have been overlooked as independent testimony of what the Godwins were up to Even before the Godwins knew of Harriet's death, they were endeavoring to find some way of freeing Shelley from Harriet on grounds of her alleged infidelity Mrs Godwin, who was regarded with detestation by nearly everyone, approached Crabb Robinson to see what could be done

Mrs Godwin's efforts with Robinson, as disclosed in his diaries, began on the very day Shelley received word of Harriet's suicide·

> December 15 [1816] " . . took tea with Mrs Godwin at her request, she wishing to speak with me tête-à-tête (The subject was the practicability of obtaining the divorce of Mr Shelley from his wife, who, Mrs Godwin says, was guilty of adultery before Mr. Shelley ran off with Mr Godwin's daughter In this case Shelley would certainly marry Mary Godwin I informed Mrs Godwin that as Mr Shelley has lived in adultery himself he could not obtain a divorce at Doctors' Commons, and so could not obtain one in Parliament Mrs Godwin spoke with "feeling" of the whole affair I was glad to hear that Shelley treats Mary Godwin affectionately, but sorry to find that all the "children" sanction what Mary Godwin has done, even the eldest, Fanny, quite approves Yet Mrs Godwin says not only that Godwin quite reprobates the act, but that none of his writings "authorise" it And when I pointed out to her expressions in *Political Justice* she declared her ignorance of them and says that certainly Godwin had forgotten them)[36]

[35] Medwin, Thomas *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* With an Introduction and Commentary by H Buxton Forman London, Oxford University Press, 1913 Page 464.
[36] Robinson, Henry Crabb, *On Books and Their Writers* Edited by Edith J Morley London, Dent (1938) Volume I, page 199

Robinson's further commentaries on this subject are

> November 2 [1817] Montagu was employed by Shelley lately on the application to have his children taken from him by his late wife's father, on the ground that Shelley avowed atheism and lived in adultery with Godwin's daughter The application was granted It appeared that Mrs Shelley, being pregnant, threw herself into the river and was drowned It is singular that it was not suggested to Basil Montagu by Shelley that he was not the father of his wife's child Mrs Godwin had stated this to me as a fact Basil Montagu thinks it improbable Basil Montagu (says that Godwin borrowed money of Shelley after his daughter ran away with Shelley and before the marriage) This I am unwilling to believe Though when integrity is so hard to preserve under poverty we ought not to expect moral delicacy and refinement [37] [Godwin had no such "integiity"]
>
> November 6 [1817] I then went to Godwin Mr Shelley was there I had never seen him before His youth and a resemblance to Southey, particularly in his voice, raised a pleasing impression, which was not altogether destroyed by his conversation, which is vehement and arrogant and intolerant Mrs Godwin, in Shelley's absence, took occasion to observe angrily that no one asked for Mrs Shelley, and inquired whether I did not know she was married Shelley's return prevented my reply, which would not have been agreeable [38]

One other passage from Robinson is necessary to show that he did not believe Harriet was pregnant when she drowned herself

> It was during this year, Dec 15, 1816, that Shelley attached himself to Mary Godwin which led to events that acquired a sad & memorable notoriety Mrs Godwin consulted me on the state in wh Shelley then (Dec 25th) was with both his wife and the Godwin family Mrs Godwin accused Mrs Shelley of being guilty of adultery & alleged this as an excuse for Shelley's conduct I had no confidence in Mrs Godwin's veracity, nor on her word alone could I believe that Mrs Shelley was enceinte when she was found drowned by an act of suicide [39]

Mary's Major Ryan Charge

What is the evidence that Shelley ever heard of Major Ryan as a lover of Harriet or that he made use of it to persuade Mary to elope? It

[37] *Ibid*, volume I, page 211
[38] *Ibid*, volume I, page 212
[39] Robinson, Henry Crabb *Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Lamb, &c Being Selections from the Remains of Henry Crabb Robinson* Edited by Edith J. Morley Manchester University Press, 1932 Page 69

rests solely on a suspicious note that Claire is alleged to have appended to one of her transcripts of Mrs Godwin's correspondence with Lady Mountcashell This note, first printed in Dowden, reads "He [Shelley] succeeded in persuading her [i e persuading Mary Godwin to elope with him] by declaring that Harriet did not really care for him, that she was in love with a Major Ryan, and that the child she would have was certainly not his This Mary told me herself, adding that this justified his having another attachment I spoke to my mother and to the Boinvilles on this point in after years Neither had ever seen or heard of any such person as Ryan" (I, 424-5).

To accept this story, we must believe (1) that Mary was telling the truth rather than justifying herself, since she is the only one who ever attached the name of Major Ryan to this tale (2) That Claire is reporting correctly what Mary told her (3) That Claire actually wrote this note to her transcript, and that it is in her handwriting Even here, Claire denies ever having heard of Major Ryan, or that her mother, or the Boinvilles had ever heard of him

Commenting on the reliability of these documents, Dowden says he printed them from the earlier of two transcripts Claire had made, stating that "where the transcriber [Claire] desired to omit or alter any statement or any word or phrase, or insert anything, she did not hesitate to do so . . . that her transcript may be accepted as representing the original in essentials Still it is very far from possessing the authority of an original document" (II, 541).

Another reference (not naming Major Ryan) but referring to him as "an Irish adventurer" with whom Harriet was acquainted comes from another member of the Godwin circle Charles Clairmont in a letter to Francis Place, January 12, 1815 [for 1816] specifically repudiates the idea that there was any infidelity, in these words "She [Harriet] associated (I do not at all mean what the world calls criminally) with an Irish adventurer whom she commissioned to take all possible legal advantage of Shelley" [White II, p 504]

Professor White is correct in demonstrating that Harriet and Shelley and Mary were acquainted with a man by the name of Ryan – always referred to, however, in the Journals as *Mr* Ryan, it is only Mary, in Claire's dubious note aforesaid, who calls him *Major,* and who says Shelley accused Harriet of infidelity with him

Professor White, furthermore, has worked out from the military Ryans the probable Major Ryan to whom Mary refers. We need here only refer to his comprehensive notes on this point (I, pp 674-6).

We shall let the reader count for himself how many removes from the truth we are here, but we are justified in suspecting, with no better basis than this, that the Major Ryan story is a fabrication of the Mary and Lady Shelley

contingent put forth to establish the Shelley Legend to justify Mary at the expense of Harriet.

Before asserting, then, that Shelley believed or employed this argument whether he believed it or not, because "its truth was so utterly necessary" (White, I, 346), it is more charitable to Shelley, in view of these Godwinian origins, to doubt that he ever used it As White himself says, "Godwin was convinced of what he wished to believe" – a point that Matthew Arnold and Mark Twain also effectively make

Enter Godwin's Colonel Maxwel

We now have the dubious privilege of introducing a new name to Shelley biography – Colonel Maxwel, who has not been revealed before, another military man charged by Godwin with having also shared Harriet's favors It has been supposed heretofore that Godwin in his Letter to William Baxter of May 12, 1817, was referring to Major Ryan, in the passage

> "The late Mrs Shelley has turned out to have been a woman of great levity I know, from unquestionable authority, wholly unconnected with Shelley (though I cannot with propriety be quoted for this) that she had proved herself unfaithful to her husband before their separation "

Dowden employs this passage twice in his biography (I, 426, II, 97-98) to fortify the Major Ryan story which Mary had told Claire Moreover, by giving sanction, not to the truth of this scandal, but to the contention that Shelley believed it and used it, Dowden gave great offense to his critics He was hardly honest, however, in stating that this passage referred to Major Ryan, unless he was victimized by Lady Shelley who did not show him the original letter but only a garbled transcript from which Colonel Maxwel's name had been deleted The last sentence of the paragraph quoted above, which has never been given in full, and which we now quote from a photostat of the whole letter, reads

> "Afterwards, she was guilty of repeated acts of levity, and had latterly lived in open connection with a colonel Maxwel Peace be to her shade!"

Why Lady Shelley and Dowden withheld Colonel Maxwel's name we shall probably never know. Certainly, had Dowden possessed it he should never have used the letter to build up the Major Ryan legend We can now see clearly why Dowden kept bitterly complaining to Garnett about his having to use "abstracts of abstracts" rather than the originals, few of which apparently Lady Shelley ever allowed him to examine

We are also led to wonder in passing how it happened that these damaging letters about Harriet escaped from the archives of Lady Shelley's Bos-

combe Manor into public circulation The forged December 16, 1816 letter turned up – who knows how? – in the Bath post office in 1859 after having been in the possession of the Shelley family since 1851! The Baxter letter, transcripts of which Dowden used and sent to Mr William Esdaile, appeared, as Professor White says (II, p 720, n 23, p 724, n 35), "in the Catalogue [Sotheby's] of the sale of 'The Property of a Gentleman living at Leamington', December 8, 1911" item 299 Then it emerged as no 1111 in the Jerome Kern sale, was bought by Dr Rosenbach for $1500, sold to Owen D Young, and became a part of the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, whose authorities have graciously allowed us to quote from it

Shelley's Letter to Mary of January 11, 1817

A third allusion to the story of Harriet's infidelity *before* Shelley's elopement with Mary is contained in the letter Shelley is alleged to have written to Mary on January 11, 1817 The following passage, lines from which appeared in the *Athenaeum* for December 23, 1848 (p 1298), on the occasion of its first sale, raised a storm of protest in Harriet's behalf – a protest which has never been silenced in subsequent Shelley criticism

> "I learnt just now from Godwin that he has evidence that Harriet was unfaithful to me *four months* before I left England with you If we can succeed in establishing this, *our* connection will receive an additional sanction, and plea be over borne On the 19th the Chancellor begins to sit and it must be decided instantly from the nature of the case" (Ingpen, Julian edition, *Letters* IX, 216)

In the light of what we have just disclosed, the reference here may now be either to Mary's Major Ryan, or to Godwin's Colonel Maxwel.

Our contention here, however, is that all known manuscript versions of this letter, like those of the letter of December 16, 1816, are Major Byron forgeries, as a careful study of their provenance discloses

PROVENANCE

When Lady Shelley in 1892 dispersed her Shelley materials she bequeathed *two* manuscripts of this same letter, one to the Bodleian, and one to Sir John Shelley-Rolls So far as is known, there was no notation on either of these manuscripts to indicate where they came from, or how there happened to be two almost identical manuscripts of the same letter, each manuscript supposedly in Shelley's hand [40]

[40] A description of the Shelley-Rolls manuscript is to be found in *Verse and Prose from the Manuscripts of Percy Bysshe Shelley,* edited by Sir John C E Shelley-Rolls, Bart and Roger Ingpen London Privately Printed, 1934 Pages 134-135 The textual differences between this manuscript and "the Oxford copy" are to be found on page 135

De Ricci (page 239) handles the problem of authenticity in a forthright manner by picking out as the genuine original the Bodleian manuscript, from which Ingpen drew the text for the Julian edition of Shelley's letters De Ricci also notes that a forgery of this letter "was bought by Sir Percy and Lady Shelley" in the 1851 sale

A moment later, however, in discussing Ingpen's Letter 314, which is a part of the Bodleian copy, Ingpen's 313, De Ricci remarks

> Mr Hill informs me it is not in Shelley's autograph, is the whole letter, by any chance, a G Byron fabrication?

The conclusion is that both the Bodleian and the Shelley-Rolls manuscript of this January 11, 1817 letter are Major Byron forgeries We have already revealed in a previous chapter the Major's part in supplying his forgeries for these sales

De Ricci is led into the error of supposing that # 731 in the Hodges sale of 1848 was bought in by Evans for William White and reappeared (as the same letter) in the 1851 sale, where it was purchased by Hookham for the Shelleys as # 1199 An examination, in parellel columns, of the two catalogue descriptions will reveal that De Ricci is wrong We are dealing here with two letters, not one

1848	1851
# 731 Shelley (P B) ALs 6 pages 4to to his Wife, Jan 11, 1817 Very interesting, on the subject of his children "They have filed a Bill to say that I published *Queen Mab*, that I avow myself to be an Atheist, and a Republican, with some other imputations of an infamous nature" The letter is continued upon private matters, etc	# 1199 To "Mrs Shelley, New Bond St, Bath" 5 pages, London, Jan 11, 1816 Respecting his children "They have filed a bill to say that I published Queen Mab, that I avow myself an atheist and a republican, with some other imputations of an infamous nature" The letter is full of sad details

Immediate differences are noticeable the 1848 letter is 6 pages long, as against 5 pages for the 1851 letter, the dates differ in the two letters, and # 1199 bears an address

That these were separate and distinct letters – though with an almost identical text – is easily established William White, whose letters were put into the 1851 sale, says of the 1848 letter

> The autographs of Mr Hodges, of Frankfort, came on for sale; amongst them some Shelley MSS which I examined, and found the principal document to contain nearly the same as one of my most interesting private letters, excepting that portions were

> omitted and having no post mark, which mine had, I concluded that Mr Hodges' must be a forgery, and my own the original [41]

The "principal" document of the Hodges sale, by White's description, must have been a letter to Mary (a "private" letter), letters 729, 730, and 731 were addressed or directed to Mary # 729 is only 1 page long, # 730 is 4 pages long, and # 731 is the longest, 6 pages Further, the quotations from # 730 did not re-appear, in the 1851 sale, in any letter to Mary, but only in one to Godwin (# 1180) with the date changed to August, 1817 Finally, that # 731, the January 11, 1817 letter, was the "principal" document of the 1848 sale is discernible from its spectacular contents concerning Harriet's infidelity, from the price at which it sold (£6, 6s), and from the furor it created in the *Athenaeum* review of the sale [42]

The similarity in quotations from the letters offered at both sales aroused in Mr Sotheby, auctioneer of the 1851 sale, a curiosity

> I next turned my attention to the Autograph Letters, and having read them thoroughly it occurred to me that I had perused extracts of a similar character, taken from Letters of Shelley sold in the collection of the late Charles Hodges, Esq , for some years resident at Frankfort Astonished at this, I immediately communicated my impression to Mr White, who sent me a verbal message to the effect that those letters were only *copies*, but that the letters placed in my hands were the *originals* [43]

The Shelley letters in the 1848 Hodges sale (# 724-5, 729-31 in the catalogue) were bid in by Evans, who purchased them for Mary Shelley

> The three or four lots of Shelley Letters at the [Hodges] sale brought enormous prices, and were bought by a dealer in autographs, as I understand, for the Shelley family [44]

There is undeniable proof, moreover, that one of these letters [# 724] passed from Mary into the hands of Lady Shelley and from there into Dowden's *Life* (I, 53-54), where he printed it as a genuine Shelley letter In 1889, Dowden had the uncomfortable task of admitting

> that I have been imposed upon by a clever forgery The letter, which is now before me, belongs to Sir Percy Shelley's collection, but it was obtained by purchase [45]

[41] White, William *The Calumnies of the "Athenaeum" Journal Exposed* London, William White, 1852 Page 12

[42] *Athenaeum,* no 1104 1298, December 23, 1848

[43] Sotheby, Samuel Leigh *Principia Typographica* London, Walter McDowall, 1858 Volume II, Page 105

[44] White, William, *op cit* , page 13

[45] *Athenaeum,* no 3194 51 January 12, 1889

At Mary Shelley's death, in February of 1851, these letters passed into the hands of Sir Percy and Lady Shelley. In May, 1851, at Sotheby's, Hookham bought eleven more letters, including # 1199, for the Shelley family, in Lady Shelley's words, "every one were forgeries"

Although Lady Shelley had received from Mary the version of the January 11, 1817 letter, which had appeared as # 731 in the 1848 Hodges sale, she did not know this letter had been purchased, for Mary had put it in a packet marked "Shelley's letters" Hence, Lady Shelley naturally came to regard the letter which came to her directly from Mary's packet as the *original,* and the 1851 version as the forgery it of course was

Instead of destroying this forgery, however, Lady Shelley passed it on to Sir John Shelley-Rolls, who proclaimed it, in 1934, "the original of this letter". Ingpen, who was co-editor with Sir John in this book *Verse and Prose* . . now maintained that the Bodleian manuscript was a copy, or forgery, yet in his Julian edition of the *Letters* in 1926 he had said

> The original letter in the Bodleian, consists of 4 quarto pages and it ends at the foot of the fourth page Probably there was more that is missing There is neither signature nor address (IX, 217)

In 1934, then, Ingpen held the Shelley-Rolls manuscript to be genuine, in 1926 he called the Bodleian manuscript the original At different times, then, the editor has called each manuscript a forgery – and he is correct in both instances, for each is a forgery stemming from the nimble fingers of G Byron, one letter from the 1848 sale and the other from the 1851 sale.

The next question to be decided is which letter came from the 1848 sale The copy in the Bodleian fills all the requirements. it is a 6-page quarto,[46] bears no address, has no postmark (as White said) White indicated that the Hodges letter had less material in it ("portions were omitted") As printed in the Julian edition (# 313 and # 314), this has the expression "that I avow myself to be an Atheist", as does the catalogue excerpt in 1848[47] The "to be" is not in the 1851 catalogue excerpt

On the other hand, William White had said that the 1851 copy (# 1199) had a postmark, as Sir John's copy has (JA 11 1817) The catalogue description of the letter in 1851 shows that it was addressed "To 'Mrs

[46] Though the letter numbered # 313 in the Julian edition has only 4 pages, it should actually be combined with that numbered # 314 It should be observed that the 1848 letter was "A L S", that is, an autograph letter signed The 4-page folder must have been separated from the last 2-page sheet, perhaps in Mary's packet Hence, the 4 pages plus the 2 pages would equal the 6 pages needed The writing actually occupies 6 pages, that is, the 6th page had no room for address, and so the forger put none on the paper

[47] With neither manuscript available for handwriting or textual examination, we must rely on what information we get from a comparison of the catalogue excerpts and the two printed texts

Shelley, New Bond St, Bath' ", and the Shelley-Rolls' copy is also addressed (with "12" added) Further, though this copy is described as "of six quarto pages", the description is not technically correct, for later we read

> The second part, which was printed for the first time by Dowden, consists of two pages it bears on the back the address and the postmark [48]

The text of the letter, then, is written on five pages, not six, and coincides with the description of # 1199 as five pages There is an extra paragraph in the Shelley-Rolls' copy "The Hunts send their love", and an extra word "Yet cheer up" instead of "Cheer up", which may be the "portions omitted" indicated by William White

The postmark was with White the determining factor, he did not know the forger's propensities with respect to postmarks (one letter even has two postmarks forty-three years apart ! ! !) But in 1852 Murray found that the forty-seven Byron letters which he had purchased from White were forgeries, chiefly by comparing their postmarks with those on known originals [49]

If, then, we list the people who have seen the Bodleian manuscript and pronounce it genuine, we have

1) Lady Shelley, who printed the *Shelley and Mary* version from it
2) Roger Ingpen, who printed his Julian edition of the Shelley letters from it

Those who call the Bodleian manuscript a forgery include·

1) Mr Hill, as quoted in De Ricci, page 239
2) De Ricci, who seems not to be sure, as he shows in commenting on Letter # 314
3) Roger Ingpen, who called it a "copy" in *Verse and Prose* page 134
4) Sir John Shelley-Rolls, who agreed with Ingpen in the same place
5) Marcel Kessel, in the *Times Literary Supplement,* May 29, 1937, page 412

On the other hand, those who think the Shelley-Rolls' manuscript genuine include

1) Marcel Kessel, in the *TLS,* May 29, 1937, page 412
2) Sir John Shelley-Rolls
3) Roger Ingpen, in *Verse and Prose,* page 134

[48] *Verse and Prose op cit*, page 134
[49] Though some Post-office clerks at the General Post-office in London had announced them to be genuine See the *Athenaeum* for March 6, 1852

Those who call the Shelley-Rolls' manuscript a forgery are

1) De Ricci, who lists only the Bodleian manuscript (# 313) as the genuine
2) Roger Ingpen, in the Julian edition, Volume IX, page 217
3) Lady Shelley – by implication, at least – for she printed her *Shelley and Mary* from the other copy

Out of this welter of conflicting claims the reader can pick his way, remembering that the Bodleian manuscript was purchased by Evans for Mary in the 1848 sale – and is a forgery by G Byron – and that the Shelley-Rolls manuscript was purchased by Hookham for Lady Shelley in the 1851 sale and was also found to be a forgery by G Byron

We shall never know the lengths to which the forger went to substantiate the conduct of Shelley and Mary as against that of Harriet throughout this affair until the texts of all of these letters and all other Major Byron fabrications have been revealed Apparently, only the two most damaging of these have been repeatedly reproduced and circulated until we find them still accepted as part of the Shelley canon by the most recent biographers of the Shelleys – Peck, White, and Grylls

Seymour de Ricci indulges in two wholly conjectural guesses to account for Major Byron's possessing Shelley and Mary originals Certainly, as in the case of Lord Byron, the Major had either purchased, borrowed, or stolen some Shelley originals or he would have had no models for his forgeries De Ricci in one place conjectures that Major Byron stole letters from Mary's desk in 1848 and copied the originals (page 237), in another he conjectures that Mary showed the forger "part of the Shelley letters she owned and that such is the origin of Shelley's two letters to Mary of 15 December 1816 and 11 January 1817" (page 293). If so, what was this crook doing at Field Place? The Major, it will be recalled, told Moxon that he had bought letters left behind at Marlow by the Shelleys and sold by Maddocks for Shelley's arrears in rent, a doubtful proceeding since Peacock and Ollier sent this box of letters to the Shelleys in Italy in 1819.

We shall not go further than De Ricci, for want of evidence, in speculating how close were Mary's relations with this forger or how much he did her bidding or catered to her whims or suggestions We have already shown in a preceding chapter how, in spite of expressed annoyances, she continued over an extended period to purchase his offerings, genuine and forged, both at auction and privately through Hookham

Were these forged letters, which contain such derogatory statements about Harriet and praises of Mary, wholly the product of Major Byron's invention and of his remarkably detailed knowledge of the lives of Shelley and Mary, and was he thus practicing his art to extract, as he did, more and more money from Mary, who seems, as we have shown, to have been

eager to acquire *all* his offerings? At any rate, his forged letters of 1848 and of 1851 passed into the hands of the Shelleys, and instead of destroying them, they caused them to appear as genuine in Lady Shelley's *Shelley and Mary* in 1882 and four years later in Dowden's official biography, and subsequently they dispersed them, without proper notation, to their heirs and elsewhere Meanwhile, from 1859 on, they repeatedly assured Shelley biographers that they had letters undisclosed, which would absolve Shelley and Mary from all blame Peacock, as we shall see, denied that there could be any such letters, but Hunt evidently knew how the forgeries were being used

It is significant that Lady Shelley in all her references to forged Shelley letters never mentions Major Byron, though he was publicly exposed in 1852, the year after she had bought forgeries of his at auction. It is most significant of all, however, that Leigh Hunt, whom even Mary accused to Trelawny of not writing the truth about Shelley, knew perfectly well what was going on with these forged letters and refused, therefore, to engage in Shelley biography himself Though, after Mary's death, his relations with Sir Percy and Lady Shelley were friendly, and they had to be since Hunt was dependent upon them for his annuity, he did not intend to get mixed up with forged letters In his letter to Ollier of February, 1858, commenting on Middleton's life of Shelley, he writes

> The book is a proof of what I have always said, when applied to, to write the life myself, viz that it would be impossible to give a complete account of Shelley and his connexions, till the latter were all dead and gone, even if it were possible then for any one person to be so thoroughly well informed or impartial to do it, because facts would have to be so coloured as to misrepresent both living and dead, some one way and some another, or the living would be forced either to enter into the most unseemly and worse than useless wars with one another, or to maintain silences the most difficult and distressing to keep out of delicacy, and the most self-condemning in appearance with some and in reality with others The subject even of forgeries of letters would have to come into play, *beyond* what became notorious on that point not long ago, and the consequences would be most painful to those who had most reason to complain [50]

Finally, there are other corroborative evidences outside of the field of false documents that disprove Professor White's statement that Shelley used the Major Ryan story to overcome Mary's reluctance First, had Shelley known anything about Harriet's infidelity with a Major Ryan, he would certainly have used it before the elopement not only with Mary but with father Godwin when he was trying in vain to persuade him to consent

[50] Brewer, Luther A *My Leigh Hunt Library, the Holograph Letters* Iowa City, Iowa, University of Iowa Press, 1938 Page 114

to his relations with Mary On the contrary, Godwin greeted Shelley's representations as "impious" and Shelley as a "traitor" and a "seducer" Moreover, Godwin and Harriet would not together have tried so hard to keep her marriage with Shelley intact

Second, had Shelley or the Godwins any proof of the charge, they would certainly have utilized it to the full (as the bogus January 11 letter anticipates) in the Chancery suit, where in his fight for his children Shelley would have stopped at nothing, especially with evidence of this sort which would have weighed heavily in his favor Did he withhold because of his fear of what Eliza or Westbrook might charge? He could have countered with the powerful accusations of Eliza as a murderess and precipitated the frightful scene of horror he promised to unfold in case the Westbrooks went ahead – contained in the bogus December 16 letter The fact that he used none of these charges is proof that he did not possess them (perhaps never knew them) and that their existence depends solely upon Godwin and Mary's allegations and upon the forged letters of December 16 and January 11 and January 17, which contain them — letters that probably did not exist before 1845.

Third, if Shelley had thought Harriet guilty with Major Ryan, as Professor White contends, and used the tale with Mary either before or even after the elopement, we can scarcely then account for his famous letter to Harriet from Troyes, August 13, 1814, asking her to come and join them (Shelley, Mary, Claire) or for his persistent efforts afterward to set up in England the ménage with Mary and Harriet which Basil Montague had difficulty in persuading him could not be legally effected

The conclusion is that these allegations against Harriet are Godwinian in origin and find their way into Shelley documents purchased and employed by the family to justify Mary's elopement with Shelley, they are very reluctantly first introduced into official Shelley biography by the baffled Dowden, who is careful to allege not their truth but, as White does, that Shelley believed them

Since, as Edmund Blunden remarks, "Shelley's manhood seems to be perpetually on trial," largely because of these forged letters about Harriet, it seems clear that without better grounds than these Mrs Godwin's representations to Crabb Robinson against Harriet, which he disbelieved, Mary's Major Ryan story, and Godwin's Colonel Maxwel, in a letter replete with falsehood,[51] should not be perpetuated to Shelley's discredit as fact in Shelley biography

[51] Godwin tells Baxter, for example, that Fanny died in Dublin of inflammatory fever

TWO OTHER FORGERIES

As Major Byron apparently liked to use large octavo note paper as well as quarto letter size for his fabrications, we are not surprised to find him making two additional forgeries of the January 11 letter on large paper

One was offered in the sale of George Linnicar, of Liverpool, at Puttick's on March 19, 1850 [p 47, n 363, and was purchased by Waller for eleven shillings]

Another appeared at Sotheby's on May 3, 1899 [p 8, n 113] but was withdrawn as a forgery

De Ricci (p 295) also calls attention to another, dated January 10, 1816, probably allied to this group, a one-page octavo, offered at Sotheby's, April 8, 1891 [p 10, n 147], which was also withdrawn as a forgery A quotation from it reads in precisely the style and vein of Major Byron's other imitative texts

> I am wretched and nearly broken hearted Life is uncertain
> I may perhaps never see you again If you think of me let it only
> be as you used to know and see me in happy times, etc

a product that reads indeed like a forger milking his brain in his effort to imitate a disconsolate and worried poet

When we are assured by the editors of the *Literary Gazette* that Major Byron to the best of their calculation had foisted one hundred of his forgeries on the market—and that he had besides eight portfolios of manuscript forgeries, we can see what a busy man he was between 1845 and his exposure in 1852, especially since he was going through all the uncertainties and worries of trying to market his products It is not surprising that he succeeded so well, for some of his forgeries are exceedingly good and present a plausible appearance at first glance, others are done with less care, but his telltale marks can be discovered in all of them when they are subjected, as they should be, to careful analysis

The same thing, then, has happened. two examplars of Major Byron's forgeries, one of December 16 and one of January 11, have crept back into respectability as originals by the assertions of subsequent owners and critics—a proceeding that was bound to occur and to recur in Shelley bibliography because Lady Shelley, evidently without proper notation, distributed these Major Byron forgeries between Sir John Shelley-Rolls, and the Bodleian, and there is no telling as yet what her third heir, the Earl of Abinger, may also possess of Major Byron's artful practice

The Letter of (November 4, 1814)

In his authorized biography, Dowden prints (I, 502-504) a long letter from Shelley to Mary which has not hitherto been suspected A careful reader of the letter, however, will observe that the painful financial and private details which Shelley relates to Mary in the first four paragraphs cease abruptly five lines from the bottom of page 503 Here the letter reads

> Thus it is my letters are full of money, whilst my being overflows with love and elevated thoughts How little philosophy and affection consort with this turbid scene – this dark scheme of things finishing in unfruitful death! There are moments in your absence, my love, when the bitterness with which I regret the unrecoverable time wasted in unprofitable solitude and worldly cares is a most painful weight, you alone reconcile me to myself and to my beloved hopes
>
> Good night, my excellent love, my own Mary

Item 729 in the 1848 Hodges sale, referred to before, was described thus

> A L s 1 page 4to to his Wife
> Commencing "Thus it is – my letters are full of money, whilst my being overflows with unbounded love and elevated thoughts"
> He concludes, "Good night, my excellent love, my own Mary
> P B Shelley"[52]

As we have before demonstrated in our discussion of the January 11, 1817 letter, the Shelley letters in the Hodges sale went to Evans, who then sold them to Mary Shelley Item 729, sold to Evans for 16 shillings, went to Mary, then to the Shelley heirs and into Dowden, attached as the latter portion of what is (so far as we know) a genuine letter.

The catalogue description indicates that item 729 is one page in length, and that it is signed, but not dated[53] Very likely Lady Shelley, in getting the letters ready for the *Shelley and Mary* volume, put these two manuscripts – the one unsigned ending with the words "I expect to hear from Hooper tomorrow", and # 729 in the Hodges sale, beginning "Thus it is " and signed with the formal "P B Shelley" – together Perhaps they were both quarto (we know the Hodges item was) and, following an unsigned, undated manuscript which spoke a good deal about money, item 729 seemed to belong as the ending of the letter This conclusion was strengthened by the facts that the single page was not headed at the top (addressed only on verso) and was signed[54]

[52] Catalogue of the Hodges sale, Dec 18, 1848, page 62
[53] Letters which are dated are so marked in the catalogue
[54] The two sections of the January 11, 1817 letter, conversely, had become separated, and are even now printed separately in the Julian edition

De Ricci, speaking of item 729 in the 1848 sale, calls it the same letter as item 1198 in the 1851 sale, suggesting that Evans bought it in the 1848 sale for White [55] But the 1851 catalogue description does not sustain De Ricci's theory

> To "Mary" 4 pages, n d
> An affectionate letter, and also relating to matters of business "My letters are full of money, whilst my being overflows with unbounded love and elevated thoughts "[56]

It will be noted that the 1-page letter of the 1848 sale has been expanded in 1851 to 4 pages The quotations from both catalogues, it is true, are identical, what has happened is that the forger has once more, as with the January 11, 1817 letter, duplicated a letter in parts

That is, in the 1848 sale Evans bought for Mary item 729, she put it in her packet of Shelley letters, whence it found its way into *Shelley and Mary,* tacked on as the last portion of another undated letter It is now in the Bodleian Then, in the 1851 sale Hookham bought item 1198, among others, for Lady Shelley, she promptly recognized the 4-page letter as a forgery When she disposed of her Shelley materials, she sent this forgery to Sir John Shelley-Rolls, who now has it

Dowden is of course not to be blamed for including this forgery in his biography, for he probably had no opportunity to examine the manuscript, but drew the text from *Shelley and Mary* [57]

Thus, of the seven forged letters of Shelley in the Hodges sale of 1848, three (the January 11, 1817 one, the September 13, 1812 one, and the undated (November 4, 1814) one here discussed) found their way into respectable biography in Dowden He had spoken with an almost glib assurance in 1884

> I had seen the Athenaeum on the Shelley forgeries It knew – or at least tells – only part of the truth about the forged letters of the Hodges autograph sale Though forged they were not wholly false [58]

It is really too bad that Dowden was unaware of the fact that Mary had bought the seven letters of the Hodges sale, and that what Lady Shelley handed him as "genuine letters" (or printed transcripts thereof) were indeed "wholly false", the work of G. Byron!

[55] De Ricci, *op cit*, pages 245-246
[56] Catalogue of the Sale at Sotheby's, May, 1851, page 114
[57] Though there are minor differences between the texts of this letter in Dowden and in the *Shelley and Mary,* for all practical purposes they may be thought of as the same
[58] Edward Dowden's letter to Bertram Dobell, September 25, 1884

Shelley's Letter to Byron, January 17, 1817

Immediately following the January 11th letter in the Julian edition of Shelley's letters, we find the January 17, 1817, letter addressed to Lord Byron Heretofore no doubt as to genuineness has been thrown on this particular letter by critics or biographers, yet we must examine it most carefully before permitting it to remain in the canon of Shelley biography

The letter was not published in any of the editions of essays and letters put out by Mary Shelley Its first appearance was in the *Shelley and Mary* (I, 181), edited by Jane, Lady Shelley, the letter at this time was in the hands of Lady Dorchester, who had permitted Lady Shelley to see and copy it, but who did not want the letter published When *Shelley and Mary* appeared in 1882, only twelve copies were allegedly printed, for private distribution among Shelley's heirs and friends, one copy, however, came into the possession of Lady Dorchester, who discovered that Lady Shelley had committed a breach of trust by publishing in full the letter in question Lady Dorchester thereupon threatened that, unless the entire edition were suppressed, she would ostracize Lady Shelley socially Meanwhile, before Lady Shelley complied and withdrew the books, an English writer had penned a long essay on them in the *Edinburgh Review*[59] Lady Shelley was so impressed by Lady Dorchester's protest that she did not permit Edward Dowden to use this letter in his biography of Shelley, and lest it should be employed by mistake or by design she wrote in the Dowden copy and other copies of the *Shelley and Mary,* opposite this letter and others from the same source, the words "From Lady Dorchester's papers—no quotations from this letter can be permitted "

Lady Dorchester had received this letter of January 17 from Lord Byron's friend, John Cam Hobhouse, Lord Broughton, together with additional letters to Byron written by Shelley There is no other copy of the letter listed in De Ricci, yet, curiously enough, there is a variant version in *Shelley and Mary* which includes a part-sentence· ". . . deeply) . . which you must suppose to mean, not that I wish to trouble you with them or interest you in them, but that I wish to say . . ." not to be found in Murray or in the Julian edition Again this looks like duplicate versions

After the unauthorized printing in the *Shelley and Mary,* no doubt done with a view toward adding evidence against the Westbrooks, the letter is not heard of again for some time Edward Dowden, in the official *Life,* is not permitted to quote from it, as we have said, not even in his abridged one-volume revision of 1896. Ingpen's *Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1909) contain no reference to the letter. It is not, indeed, until 1922, when John Murray brought out his *Lord Byron's Correspondence,* that the letter was

[59] *Edinburgh Review,* 156·472-507, October, 1882 The article is not signed

given to the general public (II, 29-31) Later, it was included in the Julian edition, from which we print it

To Lord Byron

London
January 17, 1817

I write to you, my dear Lord Byron, after a series of the most unexpected and overwhelming sorrows, and from the midst of a situation of peril and persecution But I have good news to tell you . Clare is safely delivered of a most beautiful girl Both the mother and the child are well, and Mary describes the latter to be a creature of the most exquisite symmetry, and as betraying, even at its birth, a vigour and a sensibility very unusual But you will doubtless learn all, and more than can relate to this subject, from Claire's letters

My late wife is dead The circumstances which attended this event are of a nature of such awful and appalling horror, that I dare hardly avert to them in thought The sister of whom you have heard me speak may be truly said (though not in law, yet in fact) to have murdered her for the sake of her father's money Thus did an event which I believed quite indifferent to me, following in the train of a far severer anguish, communicate a shock to me which I know not how I have survived The sister has now instituted a Chancery process against me, the intended effect of which is to deprive me of my unfortunate children, now more than ever dear to me, of my inheritance, and to throw me into prison, and expose me in the pillory, on the ground of my being a Revolutionist, and an Atheist It seems whilst she lived in my house she possessed herself of such papers as go to establish these allegations The opinion of Counsel is, that she will certainly succeed to a considerable extent, but that I may probably escape entire ruin, in the worldly sense of it So I am here, dragged before the tribunals of tyranny and superstition, to answer with my children, my property, my liberty, and my fame, for having exposed their frauds, and scorned the insolence of their power Yet I will not fail, though I have been given to understand that I could purchase victory by recantation Indeed, I have too much pride in the selection of their victim

So here is an imperfect account of my misfortunes (yet one thing happened in the autumn that affected me far more deeply) I should have written to you before, if I had been beaten down by any common griefs

I had last month, an unexpected letter from your friend, Leigh Hunt, whom I have since visited He is indeed a most friendly, and excellent man I have found few such as he appears to be in the world He was so kind as to listen to the story of persecution which I am now enduring from a libidinous and vin-

dictive woman, and to stand by me as yet by his counsel, and by his personal attentions to me
I have no other news to tell you, my dear Lord Byron, unless you think this is news that I often talk, and oftener think, of you, and that, though I have not seen you for six months, I still feel the burden of my own insignificance and impotence, as they must ever forbid my interest in your welfare from being put to the proof Adieu

Faithfully yours,
P B Shelley

Hunt requests me to send you his remembrances

When the text of Ingpen's transcription is examined, it exhibits a number of singularities first, it has no salutation but instead includes the name "Byron" in the first line of the letter proper, second, the letter, like the Lehigh letter, is not addressed on the outside [Ingpen, IX, 220] Byron was in Italy at this time, Shelley was in London, and the letter could hardly have been sent to Byron by hand, third, the letter seems not to have been sent through the mails, for Ingpen lists no postmark as he does for letters bearing postmarks

Many of the characteristics of the January 17 letter are common to known forgeries in Major George Byron's hand, the omission of the salutation, sometimes found in genuine letters, for example, is also to be noted in the December 15-16, 1816 Wise copy and in the December, 1816 Lehigh letter, and the existence of a variant version (the inexplicable addition of a part sentence) in the *Shelley and Mary* volume, not mentioned in De Ricci

Chronologically and internally, too, the letter fits into the general pattern of other forged letters The slander on the Westbrooks, especially Eliza, was observed in the Dec 15-16 Wise letter, and is here again, though in his December 18, 1816 letter to Eliza[60] Shelley says that he gives "no faith to the imputations generally cast on your conduct or that of Mr Westbrook" The insistence, too, that the loss of Fanny Imlay was more of a blow to him than the suicide of Harriet appears twice in the January 17th letter, in a like manner, the Wise version speaks slightingly of the loss of Harriet ". . there would, in any case have been little to regret"

Provenance

To return, then, to the provenance of this letter· where did Lord Broughton get it, if it did not come to him from Lord Byron himself? There are two possible answers, both of which we shall give.

[60] Hotson, Leslie (editor) *Shelley's Lost Letters to Harriet* London, Faber & Faber, 1930 Page 54

First, he may have got the letter at one or another of the sales (1848-1849-1850-1851) at which forged Shelley letters were continually offered, or possibly by private sale, for it is likely that Broughton was more susceptible to Shelley than to the Byron forgeries We know that Lord Broughton was in London during these years, and we know that the forger communicated with members of Byron's family during this period We observe the remark in a magazine that

> Sir John Cam Hobhouse, the friend and executor of Lord Byron, has also taken the subject up, and, we are told, denies in common with all Lord Byron's friends the right of this Mr Byron to call himself the son of the great poet [61]

which suggests that as representative of the family he likely had been waited upon by Major Byron just as Hookham and Mary had been pestered by him in 1846, and Mrs Leigh in 1844 or 1845 [62]

Second, we may look for another and different link between the forger and Lord Broughton There is a very definite and indisputable connection between the Major and John Murray III, as we see in this statement.

> Two parts of this work (*The Inedited Works of Lord Byron*) appeared in New York in 1849 It was then discontinued, and the Manuscripts of which Major Byron was possessed became the property of Mr Murray [63]

Another corroboration for this appears in

> After the appearance of two parts the work was discontinued, and the manuscripts in Colonel Byron's possession passed by purchase to John Murray III [64]

It may be that this letter was in the materials acquired by John Murray and that he naturally passed the letter over, with other manuscripts, to Lord Broughton, who already had a large collection of letters from Shelley to Byron Indeed, Murray may have been the agent for Lord Broughton in this transaction, since Murray had before (in 1843 and 1844) been in direct communication with the Major However the contact was made, whether in person, through an intermediary, or by mail, this is another forgery which has crept back into Shelley biography as an authentic letter When the present owner, who now refuses, permits the holograph itself to be submitted to unbiassed examination and publication it will be found a production of Major Byron's pen

[61] *Athenaeum,* no 1065 318, March 25, 1848
[62] *Antiquarian* 4, no 4 327, March, 1886
[63] *The Works of Lord Byron Letters and Journals* Edited by Rowland E Prothero London, Murray, 1901 Volume VI, page 460
[64] Chew, Samuel C *Byron in England* London, Murray, 1924 Page 188

4 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE FOUR HARRIET LETTERS

From the foregoing analyses of the four letters for which we hold Major Byron responsible, we conclude that the commonly accepted account of Harriet Westbrook's dereliction, suicide, and death is based upon forged and fallacious materials, and that she died wholly innocent of the charges of infidelity and prostitution that were subsequently levied against her in these forged documents

We have noted the purchase of these and other letters at intervals and their discovery as forgeries by Mary or by Sir Percy and Lady Shelley, and the subsequent distribution of them, along with other papers genuine and forged, without proper notation Prior to their dispersal we shall show that Lady Shelley from 1859 to 1886 continually referred to them as letters possessed by the family which when disclosed would absolve Shelley from all blame in the Harriet affair, and that some of these fallacious accounts were introduced first by Lady Shelley in *Shelley and Mary* in 1882 and later incorporated by Dowden in 1886 as official biographer for Sir Percy and Lady Shelley

We are of the opinion that the Westbrooks naturally did everything in their power to hush up the suicide of Harriet in the Serpentine, and that Peacock, who had first-hand knowledge, was correct in maintaining that she was taken to her father's house at her death.

We believe that both Garnett, the principal adviser to the Shelleys, and Dowden, though holding at first to a favorable view of Harriet, became persuaded by these forged evidences of various derelictions on her part Garnett of her intemperance, and Dowden of her prostitution, on the basis of the December 16th forgery We shall reveal, in the next Part, Lady Shelley's persistent and successful efforts to influence Shelley biography by the powerful and varied means at her disposal, in order to leave to posterity a beautiful legend of Shelley and Mary at the expense of Shelley's friends and especially at the expense of Harriet Westbrook and of Claire Clairmont

The study of Shelley's handwriting and that of his forger, Major Byron, has revealed that all the authorities in Shelley scholarship up to the present have at one time or another been deceived by the forgeries and have not possessed the scientific skill or the equipment of a handwriting expert to analyze the documents and to discriminate between the genuine and the spurious The extensive knowledge of Shelley's life and works shown by Forman, Garnett, Dowden, Wise, Peck, and White, or more special bibliographical acquaintance with his letters, as in the case of Ingpen and De Ricci, have proved insufficient to prevent crucial letters, not from Shelley's pen, from being admitted into the canon of his works – with the resultant drastic

warping of both his biography and the interpretation of his character All of these authorities have accepted the contested letters of December 16, 1816, and January 11, 1817 as genuine, though every known extant manuscript is revealed by its provenance or by its handwriting or by both to be a fabrication of this notorious imposter. In Part V, we shall show how another of this rogue's alleged Shelley manuscripts, *The Proposal for Reform,* was put forth by Forman and Wise, as Shelley's genuine autograph, in facsimile reproduction for the Shelley Society Publications.

PART IV.

LADY SHELLEY TAKES CHARGE OF SHELLEY BIOGRAPHY

"Shelley's sexual feeling was always inseparably mingled up with intellectual and moral enthusiasm." WILLIAM ALLINGHAM *(Rossetti Papers, 1903, page 375)*

"I wonder why Shelley biographers play the cuttlefish with Shelley and his women—Claire, Sophia, Jane Williams? Why do they not accept the man for what he was—one who found in the physical act of love the sum and culmination of spiritual yearnings—however much he might sublimate his experiences in poetry" FRANCES WINWAR

"It would be extremely interesting to know the exact history of all this complicated record, but I doubt whether it can ever be recovered now When I hear people making positive assertions in regard to the history of Shelley and his associates, I am inclined to smile There is so much that will never be known." WALDO H. DUNN

1 SIR PERCY FLORENCE SHELLEY AND LADY SHELLEY

Mary Shelley succeeded in bringing up her son as a pleasant Victorian mediocrity with the proper manners and tastes of an English landed gentleman Educated at Harrow (Sir Timothy forbade Eton where Shelley's name among the masters was still a byword and a hissing) the young man went on to Trinity College, Cambridge—for Shelley's treatment at Oxford remained a stigma still to be erased He became heir to the estates on the death of Harriet's boy, Charles, in 1826, attained his majority and an increased stipend from Sir Timothy, and on the latter's death in 1844 succeeded to the baronetcy.

Sir Percy, not knowing what to do with himself, did what Mary told him and proved a devoted son, he cared little for books, he was like his father chiefly in his passion for yachting, much to the discomfort of Lady Shelley, his wife,—and his mother He also liked photography, bicycling, and amateur theatricals Stevenson found him a pleasant fellow, perhaps because the enthusiasm of Lady Shelley discerned in Stevenson a second Shelley

Never was a youth more thoroughly directed and dominated by his mother than this fat, indolent, and good-natured Sir Percy—and it is a marvel that he turned out as well as he did Mary anxiously hovered over every hour of her boy's growing years, moved to Harrow, which she hated, to save expenses and keep her eye on him, steered him away from the daughter of Horace Smith as unsuitable, and from Dina Hunt to whom he was attracted, and led him surely into a safe and proper marriage with Jane Gibson, the widow of Charles Robert St John, the son of Lord Bolingbroke Sir Percy reacted properly, he hated Paris and its ways, and finally asked Mary to tell Claire that he had "made up his mind" [Mary's letter of June 17, 1843] "never to fall in love except in a proper way" With unerring judgment, Mary observed that Mrs St John was "a woman such as poets like to paint", "good, true, and affectionate", with "no expensive tastes" and "no love of company", and "with a fortune of £15,000 which would lighten our odious mortgages" She proved a devoted if sickly daughter-in-law during the last three years of Mary's life, and thenceforth a loyal, if exceedingly unwise, champion of Shelley, Mary, and Father Godwin Doubtless, Sir Percy's life would have been less troubled if Lady Shelley had dedicated her life to him rather than to the perpetuation of Mary's Shelley Legend—and had not, like Mrs Browning, followed the persuasions of Hume, or Home, the notorious spiritualist who raised the wrath of Robert Browning, but Lady Shelley continued an ardent devotee When Mary died in 1851 after a period of excruciating suffering from cancer of the brain, Lady Shelley felt sure "Shelley was in the room Mary's look of joy was indescribable"

Dr Julia Power does not understate the situation when she calls Lady Shelley "a more temperate Lady Macbeth" Henceforth one dared at his peril to write a word against Percy or Mary. Doubtless Sir Percy would have preferred to sail his yacht and ride his bicycle in peace, but his spouse continually spurred him to the boring and distasteful task of answering all the enemies at her dictation, and the Shelley shrine at Field Place and afterward at Bournemouth with its growing collection of Shelley documents became as carefully guarded from prying scholars and what Mary called "pecking daws and ill-conditioned wasps" as the vaults of the Bank of England

Sir Percy as a youth did not seem promising, Crabb Robinson referred to him as "a loutish-looking youth, quite unworthy his intellectual ancestors in

appearance" Mary commented on his laziness in writing letters to anyone and on his complete lack of ambition Allingham was not impressed with his love of poetry He describes him as

> a rather short, fair, and fattish man The nose which is like his mother's projects when seen in profile, but the front face is roundish and smooth, with small eyes, and a bald forehead over which the pale light-brown hair is partly drawn His voice is very quiet but in a high key (the only point reminding one of his father) his words few and whole manner placid, and even apathetic He likes yachting and private theatricals cares little or nothing for poetry or literature. He has a thinly humorous, lounging, self-possessed quietly contemptuous manner of comment and narration When I mentioned Tennyson's poetry, Sir Percy said fellows had bored him a good deal with it at one time He never read any of it of his own accord – saw no sense in it [1]

Sir Percy, therefore, hardly lived up to the expectation of Mary as one who would come to regard her labors to build up the Shelley legend as "an invaluable treasure in after times" and "a commendation of the divine virtues of your father", in fact, he found them presently an intolerable nuisance when the critics began to knock at the doors of the Shelley shrine, and he never could quite comprehend what the fuss was all about, though he remained dutiful and carried out the irksome tasks Lady Shelley placed before him

Lady Shelley's lifelong labors to perpetuate The Shelley Legend "entirely blinded her", to quote a London obituary notice of 1899.

> as to the true conditions of Shelley's relations with Harriet She built up many impossible theories and made the assertion that she held the documents which would clear the poet's moral character Finally the documents were given to Professor Dowden, and the result was fatal Shelley was not exactly a hero of romance – some one has written that Lady Shelley cared less for Sir Percy than for the Memory of his father Her life was one devoted to the rehabilitation of Shelley nor shall we question the nobility of her motives

The perseverance which had served Mary so signally, as we have seen, in building noble memorials to Shelley, and to her father and mother, was equalled after her death only by that of her daughter-in-law Lady Shelley

A crowning illustration of Lady Shelley's iron will in these matters is revealed on the authority of Mr Conway.[2] When the churchyard at St

[1] Allingham, William *A Diary*, edited by H Allingham and D Radford London, Macmillan, 1907 Page 106

[2] Underwood, Sara A *Heroines of Free Thought* 1876 Page 110

Pancras in London had to be despoiled to make way for a railroad, Lady Shelley determined to have the remains of William and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin transferred to the cemetery at Christchurch, Bournemouth, beside the grave of Mary Shelley

> The orthodox preacher who officiated in the church to which this graveyard belongs objected seriously to having the bodies of such notorious heretics interned within its sacred precincts, but the present Lady Shelley, wife of Sir Percy, evidently a woman of determination and spirit as well as an enthusiastic admirer of the noble dead whom she wished thus to pay honor to, made up her mind that the bodies should be buried there, and says Mr Conway, my authority for the statement, "One day she actually came from Christchurch in her carriage, following a hearse which bore the bodies She sat in her carriage before the locked gates, and expressed her resolution to sit there until the bodies were admitted for burial The rector, dreading perhaps the scandal which would be raised, yielded, the grave digger did his work with haste, and by night, without any ceremonial, the bodies were let down into their graves
> When afterward the baronet and his lady wished to place over the graves a marble slab, the rector again protested, on account of the inscription which said that Mary Wollstonecraft was the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* Lady Shelley asked him rather pointedly if he had ever read Mary Wollstonecraft's book, and he wavering said he had not, she said he had better read it He then said he could not find fault with it and so the inscription went on"

On Mary's death, Lady Shelley expressed her intention of going with Sir Percy to Rome to bring home the urn containing the ashes of the poet, "which we shall place in her grave" What prevented this desecration doth not yet appear—but possibly a kind Providence had pity on even an atheist poet who while living had found the Protestant Cemetery in Rome the loveliest spot imaginable in which to rest.

Lady Shelley's Largess

For the friends of the family and for all Shelley devotees who spaded diligently in her vineyard, Lady Shelley proved a veritable Lady Bountiful The Reverend Stopford A Brooke, who had proved Shelley to be a good liberal Christian before the Shelley Society, received in 1894 "with the affectionate regards of J Shelley" the exceedingly rare pamphlet *A Refutation of Deism* (1814). In due course it came into the possession of Thomas J Wise, who says he bought it from Brooke for 100 guineas Mr Wise tells Mr.

Wrenn that he also bought (c 1890) for £42 Shelley's own copy of the same title from Dr Garnett to whom it had been presented by Sir Percy Florence Shelley in 1859 [3]

These titles, through the collecting zeal of H Buxton Forman and Thomas J Wise, even at the time of Lady Shelley's decease in 1899, were rapidly increasing in market value The Reverend Mr Brooke also received the manuscript of the essay, "On Life", sold at the Red Cross sale at Christie's in 1916 for £230

Sir Charles G Halle received in 1891 Shelley's manuscript of "Lines Written in Dejection" Sir John Shelley-Rolls received a selected third portion of Lady Shelley's treasures, among them another manuscript notebook which went down with Shelley on the *Don Juan,* but was recovered in water-soaked but still legible condition

Sir Henry Taylor, J Anthony Froude, and Edward Dowden, among others, received copies of the rare *Shelley and Mary.* Dowden's copy with his and Lady Shelley's marginal annotations also came to Mr Wise

Perhaps the greatest personal recipient of such favors outside of the family heirs was Dr Garnett, the faithful mentor and guide to Lady Shelley in building The Shelley Legend Three Shelley notebooks, full of poetical fragments and variant versions, which brought at the Garnett sale the unheard of price of £3000 and went to W K Bixby, were subsequently "deciphered, transcribed, and edited with a full commentary by H Buxton Forman" and printed for the Bibliophile Society in 1911. The originals are now in the Huntington Library

Dr Garnett received also a fourth notebook which had been kept by Mary in the casket with Shelley's heart and the hair of William and Clara whom they had lost Upon the death of Mary, the casket was opened and the notebook was given to Garnett in appreciation of his services. In 1904, he presented the book to his friend, Miss V. E. Neale, whence it passed to Scribner's through the Spoor Sale for $3900 and was donated to the Library of Congress in 1941 by Mrs M J Whitall.

There were other donations of relics, letters, and memorabilia, some of which are described in Wise's *A Shelley Library,* and others, not specifically stated, which went to enhance the vast collection of H Buxton Forman, no doubt in recognition of his services in preparing and dedicating to Sir Percy Florence Shelley, son "of England's Greatest Lyric Poet", the scholarly edition in eight sumptuous volumes of Shelley's prose and poetry

[3] Ratchford, Fanny, *Letters of Thomas J Wise to John Henry Wrenn,* Knopf, 1944, pp 183, 194

The copy, which Dowden picked up for 2d in Dublin, and which Garnett calls "the greatest piece of good luck that ever yet befell a Shelley collector", brought $1650 at the Spoor Sale in 1939

Lady Shelley's Shelley Shrines

Another part of Lady Shelley's devotion in perpetuating the Shelley Legend took the form of erecting in various places suitable shrines for visitation and worship Certainly no romantic poet of the period by the time of Lady Shelley's decease had so many of them as Shelley—and because of her endeavor no other poet so quickly became a romantic and sentimental legend

The earliest memorial to Shelley and Mary, Lady Shelley had placed in Christchurch, Hants, shortly after Sir Percy and she moved to Bournemouth (See Frontispiece) This was the life-size statuary by Weekes of the gasping Shelley cast up on the beach and expiring in Mary's arms Modeled obviously after the Italian Pietas, it cleverly borrows all the religious associations of Mariolatry for Mary and Shelley

The Shrine at Boscombe

When Sir Percy Shelley and Lady Shelley purchased Boscombe Manor in 1850, they had in mind the creation of a suitable room in which Shelley mementos might be kept After Mary's death on the 1st of February, 1851, all the relics which had been in her careful keeping passed to them

In her boudoir Lady Shelley arranged a place or recess, sometimes hidden by a curtain, which was known as the "Sanctum"

> At Boscombe there is a room built expressly to receive all that we hold most sacred . This same room is never entered but by kindred feet, or by those in whose hearts Shelley lives [4]

This description, sent by Lady Shelley to Trelawny about August 10, 1878, goes on to list some of the priceless possessions held there.

These included two cases of Shelley manuscripts, bound in green-covered volumes "letters, scribbling-books, pocketbooks, rough and fair copies of poems"[5] "The tops of these cases were of glass covered with Roman satin of a peculiar hue which reminds me quite discrepantly of nectarines"[6] Beneath the covers lay the treasures the pencil-drawing done by the Duc de Montpensier (brother of Louis Philippe) and presented by him to the Ladies of Llangollen, a profile of the head of a very beautiful boy of about ten, with curls to his shoulders, the purported young Shelley, the precious volume of Aeschylus (not Sophocles) found in Shelley's pocket when he was drowned,

[4] Grylls, R Glynn *Mary Shelley, op cit*, pp 286-287

[5] Allingham, William *In Rossetti Papers, 1862 to 1870* A Compilation by William Michael Rossetti London, Sands, 1903 Page 514

[6] Bray, Mrs F E, as quoted in Grylls, *op cit*, page 253

one of his gloves, found in a book, his traveling knife and fork in a case, a plate he used at Marlow in 1817, bracelets of Mary Wollstonecraft's hair, and a miniature of little William

The ceiling of the little room was painted with stars, perhaps to recall the great outdoors which the poet had so loved, or possibly to suggest that Shelley had taken his rightful place among these restless lights of the firmament

> Radiant with million constellations, tinged
> With shades of infinite colour,
> And semicircled with a belt
> Flashing incessant meteors [7]

In a niche at the end of the recess was the full-sized, original cast of the marble monument, done by Henry Weekes, then in Christchurch, Hants, on one side of this was a bust of Mrs Shelley, on the other a bust, made from the death mask, of Mrs Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin [8] On the wall was an idealized copy of Miss Amelia Curran's picture of Shelley, the original, done in April, 1819, was in Sir Percy's room, and is now in the National Portrait Gallery

> Mrs Shelley said, "I have written to Miss Curran at Rome to give you the portrait she did of Shelley, it is unfinished, but there is no other, and I am very anxious to have it" After a pause, she added, "There is one of me too, but now no one will value that" I said, "Yes, I do" "You can have it, but it is unfinished, and she has made a great dowdy of me, I care nothing about it, my only earnest desire is to have Percy's, and that you will take the greatest precautions to convey safely to me, that is the only treasure I have, and I know you will take care nothing happens to it They are both unfinished, we were to have sat again, but we did not"[9]

Here, too, were two glazed frames containing locks of hair two of Shelley (both dark brown, one of 1816 and one of 1822); one each of Mary (light and faded, 1851), Sir Percy Florence Shelley (very light, 1821), Lord Byron (turning grey, 1822), the Countess Guiccioli (blonde), Leigh Hunt (nearly black, 1817), Thomas Moore (nearly black), Edward Trelawny (1822), and Edward Williams (1821).

[7] *Daemon of the World* (I, 144 ff)

[8] "They have a bust of Mary Wollstonecraft done from a death mask over which Louis [Robert Louis Stevenson] raves and justly, for it is the most interesting thing ever seen" A letter of Mrs Robert Louis Stevenson to Colvin, dated 1885, in *The Colvins and Their Friends*, by E V Lucas New York, Scribner's, 1928 Page 167

[9] *Trelawny, Edward John, Letters of* Edited . . by H Buxton Forman Oxford University Press, 1910 Page 263

On the wall also was a picture of Mary Shelley, done by Richard Rothwell, and now in the National Portrait Gallery

> an excellent example of his work, and reveals the sweet-faced refined woman that she was, her hair neatly parted and bound by a circlet inlaid with one stone above the forehead Behind there is a slight indication of a flame burning possibly over some city, perhaps Shelley's spirit hovering above Eternal Rome I remember this flame was discovered by an accident, for the picture was sent into Bournemouth for repair, and nearly ruined by varnish and repainting, so that Buttery had to restore it, which he did so excellently that many hitherto undiscovered beauties were revealed [10]

There was, too, a portrait of Trelawny, which Lady Shelley threatened to remove because of Trelawny's repudiation of Mary and the harsh judgment he had passed upon her in his letters Lady Shelley writes him

> There is a picture too—the only one allowed to hang in the same room with those so sacred to us—again, "Edward Trelawny"! Hitherto these objects have been cherished under the roof of Shelley and Mary's son, but the time has come when we must ask you whether they have any right to retain their place At *your bidding* they shall be removed and therefore, I beg that you will answer as to this matter [11]

Various people reacted differently to the veneration which was expected of visitors to this hallowed place.

> I am glad to say that he and his wife have a veritable *culte* for the memory of the poet [12]

Jane Williams, however, was not wholly impressed by the display

> Mrs Hogg told with some disdain how Lady Shelley, having erected a sanctuary to the poet, commanded that hats and bonnets should be removed by all who approached it, although, as Jane commented scornfully, "in church we put them on "[13]

Such irreverence, we are sure, would never have met with the approval of Lady Shelley or Sir Percy, who had labored hard and long to perpetuate and immortalize in visible form—though far from the madding, vulgar crowd—the memories of Shelley and Mary.

[10] Bray, *loc cit*,

[11] Grylls, *op cit*, page 287

[12] *Motley, John Lothrop, The Correspondence of* Edited by George William Curtis, New York, Harper, 1889 Volume II, 359

The letter, addressed to Dr Oliver W Holmes, is dated January 26, 1873, and refers to Lady and Sir Percy Shelley

[13] *After Shelley* edited . by Sylva Norman London, Oxford University Press, 1934 Page xxxix

The Oxford Memorial

Lady Shelley's final triumph, after Sir Percy had passed on to his reward in 1889, and six years before her own decease, was the erasure of the stigma of Shelley's expulsion from Oxford and recognition from the Oxford dons of their error in precipitately and ignominiously expelling the 'child of light' in 1811 for atheism and contumacy She offered to the Bodleian as tribute a third part of the letters and manuscripts in her Boscombe archives, including most of Shelley and Mary's correspondence In the space of eighty years these had become priceless treasures.

She had already engaged the sculptor, Onslow Ford, to create a Shelley monument with the original intention of placing it over Shelley's grave in the Protestant Burying Ground at Rome She discovered, however, when she was about to have the monument transferred that the daughter of Trelawny, Mrs Call, owned the land Whether or not Mrs Call had seen the monument, she could not be persuaded to let Lady Shelley erect her Victorian monstrosity in the place of the simple tablet that Trelawny had selected, fittingly inscribed with Hunt's chosen words *Cor Cordium* and the verse from Shakespeare's lyric

> Nothing of him that doth fade,
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange
> (*Tempest*, I, 2)

The insistence of Trelawny's daughter and the rights of property proved too much even for the imperious will of Lady Shelley and mercifully prevented a gross desecration For the Shelley monument is all that the bad taste of the Victorian period, revealed also in Mrs Browning's flamboyant tombstone in Florence, could imagine

The figure of the poet is borne upon the heads and upraised wings of two stately lions of green bronze, which resemble the well-known lion of St Mark In the front is a life-sized, half-draped statue of a muse, of white marble, with large breasts, holding a lyre formed of the horns of an antelope attached to a crab's shell

At the top, upon a slab of pale, sea-green Irish marble, is the glaring white figure of the naked Shelley lying in death upon the sands of Lerici, always a matter of irreverent debate among Oxford students, who confused the poet with Shenstone on one occasion when the Cambridge team came to debate the question "Was Byron a Greater Poet Than Shelley?"

On that memorable day of the acceptance and dedication, August 4, 1892, the monument was unveiled in University College where Shelley had resided Among the august assembly of bishops and dons who came to make

pious restitution were Dr Garnett, Dr Jowett, Mr William Esdaile the son of Ianthe—and Lady Shelley Edward Dowden, still nursing his bruises from his biographical wrestlings with Lady Shelley, writing of the occasion to his wife, confessed that he had "no desire to be present".

Sir Percy and Shelley's "Turn-Up Nose"

One of the sensitive points in the Shelley Legend, especially to Sir Percy and Lady Shelley, was the shape of Shelley's nose Somehow a turn-up nose for an ethereal poet would be at the least a breach in decorum, at the worst an insult to the family

When Rossetti was painfully endeavoring to sift out the truth about Shelley's physiognomy, he came upon Shelley's letter to Peacock in which Shelley frankly and amusingly comments on his own "turn-up nose"

> I, you know, have a little turn-up nose, Hogg has a large hook one, but add them both together, square them, cube them, you would have but a faint idea of the nose to which I refer [Ingpen, Julian X, p 72]

This blemish, however, could not be permitted to discolor the Shelley Legend Peacock, on the basis of Shelley's letter to him of August [22] 1819 from Livorno, and doubtless also from personal acquaintance, included this observation in his *Fraser's Magazine* articles

Rossetti had the misfortune to include in his Memoir Peacock's statement, thereupon, in spite of all Rossetti's great labors and his devotion to Shelley, Sir Percy was not satisfied. Such a fly-speck on the Shelley monument must be removed

> My dear Sir, It is with great reluctance that I take pen in hand to express disapprobation of any portions of the labours of a gentleman who has evidently put his heart and soul in the work of doing honour to my father and whose ambition most certainly is to glorify to the utmost the genius of Shelley The statement by Peacock when describing the personal appearance that the nose was slightly turned up is quite devoid of foundation – as anybody who knows the family would guarantee The pencil [drawing] of my father when 12 years old done by the Duke de Montpensier would be quite enough to settle that point (Grylls, *op cit*, 258)

To this last sentence we merely need to add Rossetti's statement in his review of Jeaffreson in the *Athenaeum*·

> The portrait of the poet as a boy, ascribed to the Duc de Montpensier, does not represent Shelley at all, we have a suspicion that Mr Jeaffreson is right as to this

Mary requested Marianne Hunt to send one of Shelley's profiles to the painter, so that he might correct his portrait of Shelley "The *nose* is any thing but right" (Jones, *op cit*, II, 235).

Lady Shelley's Visitors at Boscombe Manor

No small part of Lady Shelley's strategy to restore the poet purified to English society was to break down the wall of hostility represented by two irreconcilable families, Shelley's own family, now represented by his sisters, Hellen and Margaret, and his brother, Sir John Shelley, and Ianthe, sole survivor of Harriet Westbrook

Under the orders of Sir Timothy, his children had been brought up never to mention the name of their brother, Percy Bysshe Dante G Rossetti remembered hearing his mother say that she used to see John Shelley, a very handsome youth, and all mention of the name of his brother, "that world-abandoned rebel, the versifying atheist," was strictly forbidden (Family Letters, I, 1895 p 20) Only the marriage of Shelley and Harriet was regarded by Sir Timothy and the family as legal, and he took care to see that her children, Ianthe and Charles received their due Percy's child by Mary he intended from the beginning never to recognize When, however, Charles died and the baronetcy came unexpectedly to young Percy, Sir Timothy was compelled very slowly to change his attitude, and gradually Mary and her boy came to their inheritance, but never were they received into the bosom of the family at Field Place

It was Lady Shelley's intention to smooth out all these little differences and to reconcile not only Shelley's family but Ianthe's as well

With Shelley's sisters, we learn from Allingham, Lady Shelley had a good measure of success—even Hellen and Margaret were brought, through clever social coaxing, to visit the shrine at Boscombe and to recognize that this reprobate brother, for whom they never ceased to have an underlying affection, had given the family name an imperishable lustre

> Saturday, Oct 29 – Boscombe Sir Percy and Lady Shelley and *two sisters of Percy Bysshe Shelley* I sat between them at dinner, having taken in Shelley's favorite sister whose name is spelt "Hellen" She was lively and chatty and I looked at and listened to her with great interest She is tall and very slender, and must have been graceful and handsome in her youth I saw or fancied a likeness to Shelley She was sumptuous in light purple silk, which became her She looked about fifty-six, but must be much more Her sister, who seemed rather younger, was much less lively Tennyson's name occurring in conversation, Miss Hellen Shelley let it plainly appear that neither he nor any modern poet

> was of the least interest in her eyes "After Shelley, Byron, and Scott, you know," she said to me, "one cannot care about other poets" (Allingham Diary p 106)

Dorothy Wellesley testified, however, that to the day of their death the old prejudice lingered, the Shelley sisters always referred to their brother as "poor Percy", regarding him until the end as an outcast (*The English Poets in Pictures,* p 12)

With other persons, Lady Shelley, in spite of her persistent efforts, failed Trelawny, Peacock, and Hogg after his rejection could not be lured into her sanctuary They knew too well what she was trying to do, and they did not intend to have their names adorn the shrine

Similarly she failed with Shelley's other intimates Jane Williams specifically objected to her shrine building, and Claire Clairmont proved violently irreconcilable Lady Shelley's final picture of Claire, in *Talks With Lady Shelley,* can scarcely be called complimentary, it is in the vein of the detraction we shall find in Kegan Paul's biography of Godwin and in the *Mary Shelley* of Mrs. Julian Marshall

> Aunt Claire [Jane is speaking] thought that the Shelleys their house and belongings were theirs too I heard one day from Mary that Claire was coming to stay at Field Place I felt I could not stay in the same house with her for she got on my nerves I had often met her before my marriage and I disliked her, so I said to Mary I would leave home for a little At this she burst out in a vehement manner, not usual to her "Don't go, dear, don't leave me alone with her She has been the bane of my life ever since I was two!"

A peculiar form of emotional cruelty attended Lady Shelley's futile attempts to bring Ianthe to worship at the Shelley shrine She finally was persuaded to come, even though she had said she would not unless Lady Shelley promised that her father's name should never be mentioned in her presence or her children's, but this, says Lady Shelley

> I refused to agree to She came to us, but when we gave a children's party she would not let her children be present She had prayers or a religious service with them every evening, lasting two hours One day I left her alone in the Shelley room and when she came out I saw that she had been weeping She promised to send me some early poems in MS in return for a copy of the portrait, but after she got home she drew back from this, and I have not sent her the copy which I had made for the purpose . .

Lady Shelley offers an explanation for poor Ianthe. A clergyman—"a narrow Episcopalian told her she was wrong in making the visit and

had been led astray and she said she had been brought to see the error of her ways and retracted all she said, 'all I felt was only a passing mood I repent of all and pray God for you' "

Lady Shelley adds "I never met her since She had been taught to believe Sir Percy and Lady Shelley were eternally damned" Doubtless from the Low Evangelical point of view—Sir Percy was still an illegitimate offspring While the marriage of Harriet and Shelley had been made in Heaven—that of Mary and Shelley was eternally tainted with a bar-sinister arising from the sulphurous regions of Lucifer

Nevertheless, we find Sir Percy Florence and 'Nin' (one of his nicknames for Lady Shelley) triumphant in the success of their long campaign of literary misfeasance, malfeasance, and nonfeasance, and peacefully sipping at the commencement of the New Year of 1880 "Nin's evening 'physic', milk and *eau de vie*"—which Sir Percy admits he shared—"for the purpose of drinking in the New Year." (Grylls, *Mary Shelley, op cit.*, p. 263)

2. LADY SHELLEY AND EARLY BIOGRAPHERS

Hogg's Relations With the Shelley Circle

The relations of Hogg with Shelley, Mary, and Claire during the first months of 1815 require a more extended and more candid analysis than Professor White was able to provide if we are to understand the story he reveals for the first time under the title, "Experiment in Free Love" (I, 391 ff) His fragmentary account is based upon the letters of Shelley, Mary, and Hogg which the late George Stuart Gordon planned to bring out as far back as 1938, and which, when Henry Holt & Company issues it, will alter certain phases of the Shelley legend considerably

Like most experiments of this kind the effort of these youngsters to put Godwin's doctrines enthusiastically into practice in 1815 did not turn out any better than have most relationships of this sort, and the evidences of the letters and the journals are abundant to prove that it involved in its course the usual bickerings, quarrels, and jealousies that are inevitable until that utopian and improbable state in the future, recommended by Bertrand Russell, shall have arrived when humanity has emancipated itself from its possessive instincts

We need first to retrace briefly in outline Hogg's place in Shelley's life before he met Mary, for he had the advantage of knowing Shelley in 1810 before any of Shelley's other intimates Peacock met the poet in 1812, Mary and Claire became intimately acquainted with him in 1814, Hunt in 1816, and Trelawny in 1822. Hogg's friendship began in the Oxford period, and continued during the time of Shelley's marriage with Harriet, the difficult winter of 1814-1815 in London after Shelley's elopement with Mary, and

the later Marlow period from 1817 to 1818 He wrote but could not be persuaded to join them while they were in Italy, and he became a friend and aider of Mary again, after her return to London in 1823. For periods of time between he saw nothing of Shelley, but whenever they met their friendship was renewed as if it had never ceased

As a young student he had generously demanded to share Shelley's expulsion from Oxford He was attracted in turn by three of Shelley's loves, Harriet, Mary, and Jane Williams, and he appropriated for his own latter day companion this "last embodiment of Intellectual Beauty" Hogg, the Romantic rebel, gradually merged into the Regency man who surrendered to love with a wry face, though he lived with Jane without benefit of clergy and remained faithful to her until his death in 1862 So much the participator in the life of Shelley had he become that at thirty-one he wrote to Jane

> How I long, dearest Jane, to add a few more chapters to our secret history and surprising adventures and to taste once more as much happiness as is consistent with discretion [1]

The phrase "with discretion" serves perfectly to characterize the contrast between Hogg's idea of carrying on a love affair and Shelley and Mary's rash and enthusiastic espousal of Godwin's theories As a lawyer, he was wary of any publicity, and the boldness of Mary's expressions and actions and her excessive ardors frequently filled him with uneasiness and alarm

Shelley, who fervently believed in a communal sharing of men and women, with love the guiding principle, had learned nothing from his relations with Elizabeth Hitchener, Fanny Imlay, and Harriet Westbrook to swerve him from his course As he said of himself so truly "I go on until I am stopped, and I never am stopped" No man ever possessed so perfect a will to translate instantly into action the mood, the whim, or the doctrine he was at the moment espousing [2] In this respect he was the most volatile, rebellious, and revolutionary spirit that ever lived Whatever opposed him was wrong The pattern for free loving and free living Shelley found already elaborated for him in his father-in-law Godwin's *Political Justice,* and the journal reveals how almost daily at certain periods Mary, Claire, and Shelley imbibed wisdom from this bible of latitudinarian morals Moreover, from January to April, 1815, Shelley, Hogg, Mary, and Claire were quite obviously engaged in carrying out this experiment in communal sharing Professor White, who specializes, as Dowden did, in playing down Shelley's loves for other women than Mary, would have us believe that Mary began her persistent wooing of Hogg only to please Shelley and him But her fervent

[1] Grylls, R Glynn, *Mary Shelley Op cit*, page 195, n 2

[2] "Much more than by his boldness as a theorist we are impressed by his courage as an executant" George Gordon in *Proceedings of the British Academy,* 1921-1923, page 263

letters to Hogg, her reproaches of him as 'Prince Prudent', her bold indiscretions in her letters show only too plainly that, as with Shelley, Hogg in turn was more the pursued than the pursuer

A few of Mary's letters here will serve to reveal her style in such an affair at this date

January 1815

Dearest Hogg,

As they have both left me and I am here all alone I have nothing better to do than take up my pen and say a few words to you – as I do not expect you this morning

You love me you say – I wish I could return it with the passion you deserve – but you are very good to me and tell me that you are quite happy with the affection which from the bottom of my heart I feel for you – you are so generous so disinterested that no one can help loving you But you know Hogg that we have known each other for so short a time and I did not think about love – so that I think that *that* also will come in time and then we shall be happier I do think that the angels who ring for ever or ever the lovers of Jane's world of perfection There is a bright prospect before us my dear friend – lovely – and – which renders it certain – wholly dependent on our selves – for Shelley and myself I need promise nothing – nor to you either for I know that you are persuaded that I will use every effort to promote your happiness and such is my affection for you that it will be no hard task

But this is prattle – I tell you what you know so well already – besides you will be here this evening – the sun shines it would be a fine day to visit the divine Theoclea but I am not well enough – I was in great pain all night and this morning and I am just getting better

Affectionately Yours,
Mary

You need not answer this scrall.

[?4] January 1815

My dearest Hogg,

I have been trifling away my time thinking it early when to my infinite astonishment I learn that it is past two—It is useless to think of going to Theoclea to day – but tomorrow will do as well—

Shelley and Jane are both gone out and from the number and distance of the places that they are going to I do not expect them till very late – perhaps you can come and console a solitary lady in the mean time – but I do not wish to make you a truant so do not come against your conscience

You are so good and disinterested a creature that I love you more and more —

By the bye when Shelley is in the country we shall never be alone so perhaps this is the last opportunity for a long time – but still I do not wish to persuade you to do that which you ought not

With one kiss Goodbye
Affectionately yours,
Mary

If you cannot come now perhaps you can come earlier this evening than usual

January 7, [1815]

A letter with a lock of hair and a scrap of paper bearing "To Alexy from his affectionate Mary" reads as follows.

Dearest Hogg,

I send you what you asked me for – I sincerely believe that we shall all be so happy! My affection for you although it is not now exactly as you would wish will I think dayly become more so – then what can you have to add to your happiness – I ask but for time – time which for other causes besides this – physical causes – that must be given – Shelley will be subject to these also – and this dear Hogg will give time for that love to spring up which you deserve and will one day have

All this – you know is sweet hope but we need not be prudent now – for I will try to make you happy and you say it is in my power

Most affectionately yours
Mary

23 January 1815
Monday morning

When you return to your lodgings this evening dearest Alexy I hope it will cheer your solitude to find this letter from me that you may read and kiss before you go to sleep—

My own Alexy I know how much and how tenderly you love me and I rejoice to think that I am capable of constituting you[r] happiness – We look forward to joy and delight – in the summer when the trees are green – when the suns [shining] brightly and joyfully when dearest Hogg I have my little baby with what exquisite pleasure shall we pass the time – you are to teach me Italian you know and how many books we will read together but our still greater happiness will be in Shelley – I who love him so tenderly and entirely whose life hangs on the beam of his eye, and whose whole soul is entirely wrapt up in him – you who have so sincere a friendship for him to make him happy

– no we need not try to do that for everything we do will make him that without exertion but to see him so – to see his love his tenderness dear dearest Alexy there are joys that fill your heart almost to bursting and draw tears more delicious than the smiles of love from your eyes

When I think of all that we three in ea————

Here have been called away for a couple of hours from finishing your letter so I can not finish the sentence I began – or say much more – for when the course of ones feelings is interrupted they will not run lightly again besides now Shelley and Cl[are] are talking beside me which is not a very good accompaniment when one is writing a letter to one, one loves

Goodnight then – good dreams to my Alexy—

Mary

[2 March] 1815

My own dear Hogg—

You must come to us today in our new lodgings – for it is such a fine day that we have determined [to] remove – for this is a very horrid place and we are in great danger of arriving without any money for the old woman is determined to fleece us—

What a horrid man that Peacock is talking of nothing but Greek letters and type—

I write in hurry for the sun is hastening away and I ought to journey by its light

We shall see you tonight and soon always—which is a very happy thing

Yours most affectionately
the Maie

Mal il soit qui mal il pense
Bring my garters

[? March-April] 1815

Shelley's note addressed to Hogg reads

My dear Friend

Mary wished to speak to you alone, for which purpose I have gone out and removed Clare

If you should return, before this evening and are at leisure I need not direct your steps

Affectionately yours,
B P S [sic]

When Hogg late in April was becoming less interested, Mary's letter reads

[?24] April 1815

Dear Jefferson

I am not hard hearted but Clary will explain to you how we are obliged to go away – you will perceive that it was indispensable

We shall return tomorrow night or the next morning so dear Jefferson do not think very hard of the Pecksey who would not for all the world make you uncomfortable for a moment if she could help it

Clary says that she will not get lodgings so will you – but she will of course alter her mind – dear Jefferson love me all the time as I do

Affectionately yours,
The Pecksey Dor
to answer for

We shall be *very very* glad to see you to-morrow evening if you can spare time at Salt Hill

I will write Lawrence and you must go to A Row for the letter as I shall send it by coach You must not [tell] Clare of the invitation

You can write direct as C shall direct

Windmill Inn – Salt Hill
April 25, 1815

Dear Jefferson

It would have required more than mortal fortitude (and such the Pecksie does not boast of) to have resisted the sight of green fields and yew trees and have jogged up to London again – When your letters arrived Shelley's distitch was truly applicable

On her hind paws the dormouse stood
In a wild and mingled mood
Of maieishness and Pecksietude

Would it be treating you ill and wouldn't it be too much expence – Shelley said that it would not be too much expence I said that you would not be angry with a dormouse who had escaped from her London cage to green fields and acorns – dear Jefferson I am sure that you are not so selfish (pardon the word) as to be *very very* sorry

Well here am I sitting in a parlour of the Windmill Inn seeing the little white pales of the garden before where the yew and cypress flourishes in great abundance after I have written to you and Clary I mean to construe some Ovid and to be very industrious

What a shocking place London is now truly I hate it Would that I were never to enter it again – dear Jefferson do

give up the Law and come down and pass your days here – ay at the Windmill Inn if you please – I am sure that it's a better place than the Inns of Court

Now notwithstanding your ill humour which would not allow you to write to me yesterday night – I expect a very long letter tomorrow and a very kind forgiving one too, or I never will speak to you again

Well Jefferson take care of yourself and be good – Pecksie will soon be back all the better for her dormouseish jaunt and remember nothing take[s] away from my maieishness

For Maie girls are Maie girls
Wherever they're found
In air or in water
Or in the ground

Now think of me very kindly while I am away and receive me kindly when I come back or I will be no more

Your affectionate
Dormouse

I will write again in the evening, or early tomorrow and tell you all the sights I have seen

(Windmill Inn
Salt Hill)
26 April 1815

My dear Jefferson

I am no doubt a very naughty dormouse but indeed you must forgive me – Shelley is now returned – he went to Longdills – did his business and returned – he heard from Harriet's attorney that she meant (if he did not make a handsome settlement on her) to prosecute him for atheism –

How are you amusing yourself with the Pecksie away very doleful no doubt but my poor Jefferson I shall soon be up again and you may remember that even if we had staid you would not have seen much of me as you must have been with me –

Do you mean to come down to us –I suppose not Prince Prudent well as you please but remember I should be *very* happy to see you If you had not been a lawyer you might have come with us –

Rain has come after a mild beautiful day but Shelley and I are going to walk as it is only showery

How delightful it is to read Poetry among green shades Tintern Abbey thrilled me with delight –

But Shelley calls me to come for
The sun it is set
And night is coming

I will write perhaps by a night coach or at least early to-morrow–

I shall return soon and remain till then

An affectionate but Runaway
Dormouse

Windmill Inn
Salt Hill
April 26th 1815

Dear Jefferson,

You must not go to courts very early to-morrow as it is most likely we shall be with you about nine – We shall try to get a place in the mail which comes into London about seven so you must rise early to receive the Dormouse all fresh from grubbing under the oaks

But you must know that I think it very dangerous for Shelley to remain in London – the Bailiffs know Longdill to be his attorney and of course will place spies there and indeed what part of London can he walk about free in – none I fear – Have you not thought of this and what do you think of it now – but more of this when we meet

The Dormouse is going to take a long ramble to day among green fields and solitary lanes as happy as any little animal could be in finding herself in her nature nests again – I shudder to think of breathing the air of London again – Jefferson Jefferson it is your duty not [to] keep any creature away from its home so come – I shall expect you tonight and if you do not come I am off – not for London I promise you –

But dear Jefferson all things considered the danger of Shelley remaining in London and my hatred of it do you not think that you ought to come to Salt Hill *incontinently* – Remember I shall believe that your love is all a farce if you do not – so I expect you Adieu – though he is but a bad sort of a personage yet he is good enough for you *Adieu* therefore

Yours – as we shall see when we know how you behave
A Runaway Dormouse

You have not chosen to write to me very well I know by this what you are good for

I wish if there is time that you would send us some money or I do not think we shall have quite enough

* * * * * * *

If we ask why Hogg was so offish and wary and ill-inclined to follow Mary's urgencies to live with them, we may recall that Hogg was a lawyer and that in Edinburgh he had already suffered one uncomfortable and embarrassing experience when he had endeavored to share Harriet on the same

free-love basis that Shelley and he had so often discussed and so freely accepted Shelley's reactions, as well as Harriet's, had been altogether different from Hogg's logical expectations

Shelley's objections to the Harriet-Hogg affair in Edinburgh did not, as is often alleged, mean treachery on Hogg's part or involve a complete reversal of Shelley's declared free-love beliefs, although under the pressure and presence of Eliza and Harriet he expressed at the time a multitude of confused and contradictory emotions His principal contention was that as Harriet had no love for Hogg, he should not pursue her, for sensual indulgence without love was always to Shelley a violation of nature, a disgust and a horror, especially when later he saw his friend, Byron, recklessly wallowing in it at Venice Hogg had not committed a crime but an error in judgment for which Shelley readily forgave him

In 1811 he was admonishing Hogg in a long letter on the Harriet affair.

> But do not love one, who *cannot* return it, who if she *could, ought* to stifle her desire to do so Love is not a whirlwind, that it is unvanquishable![3]

This was Shelley's position in 1811 But when he met Mary in 1814, he encountered that very whirlwind he had denied Had Harriet, however, revealed as open an affection for Hogg as Mary reveals in her letters to Hogg of 1815, Shelley might have reacted with little or no remonstrance, but rather have encouraged the union as readily as he forgave Hogg his attentions to Harriet, and as urgently as the letters to Hogg reveal Shelley's eagerness to have Hogg share Mary with him

Harriet, however, in spite of all her pretty prattlings about free love in echo of Shelley, and her urgent invitations at his request to Elizabeth Hitchener to come live with them, little expected the translation of Shelley's theories into action, it is doubtful that she understood the full implications of Shelley's Godwinian enthusiasms, for her great distress began when she perceived, as Eliza averred, that Miss Hitchener was trying to pry Shelley loose from his wife[4]

The greatest blow of all fell when Shelley eloped with Mary. Harriet's moral repulsion and indignation were so acute that she cried out in letters to her friend, Catherine Nugent, that Shelley had been led into this criminality by Mary's seductive free-love theories and insistencies (As Lady Shelley in after years was to assure Maud Rolleston "You know, dear, the woman can make or mar the man!") Harriet's agonized protest does not sound like the silly, shallow, intemperate woman Dr Garnett and Lady Shelley believed her to be

[3] *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, Julian Edition, Volume VIII, page 194

[4] That Miss Hitchener's motives were primarily mercenary and do not call for the tears that some critics have shed on her behalf has been made clear by Walter Edwin Peck's introduction to twelve Hitchener letters (1926)

> Mary was determined to seduce him[5] She is to blame She heated his imagination by talking of her mother, and going to her grave with him every day, till at last she told him she was dying in love for him, accompanied with the most violent gestures and vehement expostulations He thought of me and my sufferings, and begged her to get the better of a passion as degrading to him as to herself She then told him she would die – he had rejected her, and what appeared to her as the sublimest virtue was to him a crime Why could we not all live together? I as his sister, she as his wife? He had the folly to believe this possible, and sent for me, then residing in Bath You may suppose how I felt at the disclosure I was laid up for a fortnight after I could do nothing for myself He begged me to live The doctors gave me over They said 'twas impossible I saw his despair The agony of my beloved sister, and owing to the great strength of my constitution I lived.

Harriet's account of the elopement is interesting when laid beside Shelley's letter to Hogg of October 5, 1814 which in the main substantiates Harriet's Here is Shelley, caught in the whirlwind of Mary's celestial fascinations in comparison with his own poor gifts.

5 October 1814

> . . I speak thus of Mary now . . and so intimately are our natures now united, that I feel whilst I describe her excellencies as if I were an egotist expatiating upon his own perfections – *Then,* how deeply did I not feel my inferiority, how willingly confess myself far surpassed in originality, in genuine elevation and magnificence of the intellectual nature until she consented to share her capabilities with me I speedily conceived an ardent passion to possess this inestimable treasure In my own mind this feeling assumed a variety of shapes I disguised from myself the true nature of my affection I endeavoured also to conceal it from Mary but without success I was vacillating and infirm of purpose, I shuddered to transgress a real duty, and could not in this instance perceive the boundaries by which virtue was separated from madness, where self devotion becomes the very prodigality of idiotism Her understanding was made clear by a spirit that sees into the truth of things, and affections preserved pure and sacred from the corrupting contamination of vulgar superstitions No expressions can convey the remotest conception of the *manner* in which she dispelled my delusions The sublime and rapturous moment when she confessed herself

[5] Shelley's *Lost Letters to Harriet,* edited with an Introduction by Leslie Hotson, London, Faber & Faber, 1930, pp 26-27 Hotson, quoting from Wise's version (*op cit*, p 57), prints "secure him" Ingpen, X, p 420, prints "seduce him"

mine, who had so long been her's [*sic*] in secret, cannot be painted to mortal imaginations – let it suffice to you, who are my friend to know and to rejoice that she is mine that at length I possess the inalienable treasure, that I sought and that I have found —

Tho' strictly watched, and regarded with a suspicious eye, opportunities of frequent intercourse were not wanting When we meet, I will give you a more explicit detail of the progress of our intercourse How in opposition to her father's will, to Harriet's exertions we still continued to meet – How Godwin's distress induces us to prolong the period of our departure How the cruelty and injustice with which we were treated, compelled us to disregard all consideration but that of the happiness of each other

We left England and proceeded to Switzerland returned thro' Germany and Holland Two months have passed since the new state of being commenced How wonderfully I am changed! Not a disembodied spirit can have undergone a sharper revolution! I never knew until now that contentment was anything but a word denoting an unmoving abstraction I never before felt the integrity of my nature, its various dependencies, and learned to consider myself as an whole accurately united rather than an assemblage of inconsistent and discordant portions Above all, most sensibly do I perceive the truth of my entire worthlessness but as depending on another And I am deeply persuaded that thus ennobled, I shall become a more true and constant friend, a more useful lover of mankind, a more ardent asserter of truth and virtue above all more consistent, more intelligible more true —

My dear friend I entreat you to write to me soon Even in this pure and celestial felicity I am not contented until I hear from you.

Most affectionately yours,
P B Shelley

Shelley quite plainly reveals that they eloped despite Godwin's efforts and Harriet's exertions Both letters should put an end, therefore, to the Shelley family fable that Harriet and Shelley after prolonged estrangement finding each other incompatible, parted by mutual consent, and to Garnett's statement, in *Relics of Shelley* (p 160)· "But their [Shelley and Mary's] MS journal proves conclusively that they had no idea of any interference or opposition on her [Harriet's] part."

Moreover, Shelley's famous letter written immediately to Harriet from Troyes urging her to "come to Switzerland" where she would "find one firm and constant friend, to whom your interests will be always dear," also gives the lie to the "incompatability" fable, as does his consultation with Basil

Montagu, the lawyer, about having Mary and Harriet in one household, and his hardly being persuaded that such an arrangement could not be legally sanctioned or effected He did not perceive why he could not have them both! To divide should not be to take away As Edith Wyatt says

> Those who have read his correspondence unaided by the interpretation of Mary or her partisans would, I believe, not have been astonished if the admiring youth had been accompanied by all four of his young friends, by Harriet and Fanny as well as by Mary and Claire Never was a creature less single or more single-minded in his attachments it seems undeniable that he honestly cared for them all, that it was no part of his intention to cut himself off from Harriet completely, and that even in his fiery passion for Mary he was somewhat dismayed by her eager claimancy, somewhat alarmed, as he well may have been, by their project of a continental tour, and that, at the hour of departure, he clung to Claire in a kind of terror

The struggle Shelley went through at the time indicates that he felt deeply his separation from Harriet and their child, Ianthe, and the expected new child—which turned out to be his first-born son, Charles Even in after years his thoughts of Harriet, as of Fanny Imlay, returned to depress him, though the effrontery and self-assurance of his letters to Harriet (which Professor Hotson found in the legal records of the Chancery suit) reveal Shelley's enormous capacity for self-deception and for rationalizing anything he wished to do

At the very moment that Harriet was giving up hopes of Shelley—Mary, who then believed in free love quite as fervently as Shelley did, was beginning her pursuit of Hogg. Not until she had besieged him, as we have seen, with letter after letter to come live with them was he persuaded to join the communal circle, or as Mary inaccurately phrased it in her journal "Claire's sublime community of women." In January, Mary was expectant and in a few months would give birth "prematurely"—as the Shelley family always took great pains to emphasize—to a *seven-month's* child. The insistence on the seven months, always a matter of innuendo with the French, was to put, if possible, a better face on Shelley's relations with Mary, to imply that Shelley had no sexual relations with her until after the elopement—a distinction after all between Tweedledum and Tweedledee—since in either event their union was adultery

Professor White (I, 391 ff), as we have said, would have us believe that the affair with Hogg was only a pleasant flirtatious game which Mary was playing in order to please both Shelley and Hogg, and he also makes much of the fact of Mary's expectancy at that time as a deterrent He does not make clear, however, that the deletions of the journals during these years as well as what they retain are only too eloquent, as are the letters which

have survived, that in spite of the birth of the 'premature' child who promptly died, the 'experiment' was carried on afterward (from March 10 to April 17) with the resultant intermittent quarrels and conflicts During these times while Shelley was busy as usual "walking out" with Claire, much to Mary's disquietude, Hogg was, among other consolations teaching Italian to Mary See also Hogg references in *Shelley and Mary* (I, 48-69)

The conflict became so intense and the quarrel so bitter that Shelley, after Hogg had departed, left the house and spent an undetermined period with Claire, while Mary wrote distractedly, suspecting he was with Claire and exhibiting great anxiety over the outcome [6]

It is almost a certainty that instead of five manuscript volumes of the journal, which Miss Grylls has described (*Mary Shelley,* pp 273-275) there originally were six Lady Shelley informs us that Shelley and Mary, like Godwin, kept a diary for every day of their lives The missing volume would have enough entries from May 14, 1815 to July 21, 1816 to fill another notebook Moreover, the first entry of the so-called second volume begins with a description of a trip to Chamounix which Shelley, Mary, and Claire took when their sojourn in Geneva was half over. At the end of the first volume, when Mary had finally succeeded in dispatching Claire to Lynmouth, she writes, on May 13, 1815 "I begin a new Journal with our regeneration" We can only conclude that the journal covering the dates between contained entries that Mary found in retrospect too painful for perpetuation, and that she herself rather than Lady Shelley made the deletions in the first volume and disposed of the second because they covered the ups and downs of the experiment in free love then going on between Shelley, Claire, Mary, and Hogg, as well as the early days with Byron at Geneva It seems certain that Lady Shelley could not have known about this undisclosed period of Mary's career or she would never have asked Hogg in 1858 to write the authorized biography of Shelley. Possibly, on the other hand, Hogg's inclusion of this affair in his memoirs, suppressed by Lady Shelley, was an added reason for her dismissing him in the midst of his labors We can hardly believe he would have suppressed the episode, though he might have treated it in his usual manner of cynical levity It is significant, too, that Claire's diary for this period is also missing We know that she was supposed, as Sir Percy and Lady

[6] Professor J Harrington Smith has limned clearly and convincingly the situation up to 1818 in his admirable discussion "Shelley and Claire Clairmont" (P M L A LIV, 785ff) which does not need to be repeated here Professor Frederick L Jones in an answer (*South Atlantic Quarterly* XLII, No 4, Oct 1943) has attempted a refutation by quotations from the diaries He makes no mention of omissions and excisions in the diaries by Mary or the bowdlerizing of them later by Lady Shelley in her printed version Moreover, what he does quote is eloquent proof of the very opposite of his contention that the differences between Mary and Claire were merely temperamental It never seems to occur to him that Mary had reasons for cutting out pages, passages, and words from the journals during the period Further, the statements in his two-volume *Letters of Mary Shelley* about this affair grossly contradict his reply to J H Smith

Shelley were led to believe, to have given all her papers of any biographical or literary value to Mary (Grylls, *op cit*, p 237), but we know that Claire retained many letters of Shelley to Godwin besides her own journal and Shelley's letters to her that she transcribed for Trelawny but which Sir Percy and Lady Shelley refused to purchase. Furthermore, the deletions in the diaries are coincident with crises in the Shelley household. The first omissions, which begin August 15-17, 1814, are marked, "Leaves torn out", the omissions begin again in January and February of 1815, those which remain reveal Mary's increasing irritation with Claire. January 7 reads "Hogg goes away at three, Shelley and Claire do not return until near ." with the explanation again "Leaves torn out" Then follow omissions for January 8-11, 15-22, 25-29 January 14 reads "Shelley and Claire out all day Forget . " then "Leaves cut out" The blank for January 25-29 is not explained

For February there are two important omissions 10-12, 17-22 The entry of the 9th reads "Shelley and Claire sleep as usual Hogg does not come until ten Work and talk Shelley writes letters Go to bed A mess " Then, "Leaf torn out". Mary resumes the journal on February 13 February 17 has, "Claire very unwell Wet in the morning" More leaves are cut out and the next entry of February notes that they were very anxious, as on February 22 came the birth of Mary's first child On March 2 they moved again, despite the child's precarious condition, and it is no surprise that the child died on March 6 Shelley and Claire seem to have ignored her misery, for the entries continue

March 7 – Shelley and Clara go after breakfast to town . . A fuss

March 8 – Talk with Shelley In very bad spirits, but get better

March 11 – Very unwell Talk about Clara's going away, nothing settled, I fear it is hopeless She will not go to Skinner Street, then our home is the only remaining place I see plainly What is to be done?

March 12 – Very quiet all the morning, and happy for Clara does not get up till 4

March 13 – Shelley and Clara go to town

March 14 – Shelley and I go upstairs and talk of Clara's going, the prospect appears to me more dismal than ever, not the least hope This is, indeed, hard to bear[7]

During this time when Hogg was living with them Mary shared her reading with him, while keeping an anxious eye on the chess games and the books Shelley shared with Claire Mary did not give up hope that she could

[7] *Shelley and Mary*, pp 67-68

rid herself of Claire To Hogg she wrote, "Clary says that she will not get lodgings so will you—but she will alter her mind" As Claire hung on, Mary in May suddenly renewed her efforts

> May 8 – Go out with Shelley to Mrs Knapp, not at home Go with Shelley again to Mrs Knapp, she cannot take Clara Clara goes out with Shelley
> May 11 – Shelley walks out with Clara
> May 12 – Shelley goes out with his friend, he returns first Shelley and the lady walk out . . . Shelley and his friend have a last conversation
> May 13 – Clara goes Shelley walks with her Get very anxious about Shelley, go out to meet him, return, Shelley returns at half-past six, the business is finished After dinner Shelley is very tired.[8]

No wonder the poet eloquently wrote

> I could lie down like a tired child
> And weep away the life of care

Mary's next entry was confident "I begin a new Journal with our regeneration"—to which an editorial footnote has been added "The departure of Miss Clairmont" Unfortunately, Mary's confidence was premature There are no entries in the journal until July 21, 1816, a few letters fill up the time between One from Claire to Fanny, May 28, 1815, written while she was at Lynmouth, gives us a picture of what the journal hints at "After so much discontent, such violent scenes, such a turmoil of passion and hatred, you will hardly believe how enraptured I am with this dear little quiet spot."[9] But Mary was left solitary sometime during the summer

Her tearful letter of July, written from Clifton to Shelley, shows that Shelley had been away from her, ostensibly house-hunting On June 22 he had been in Torquay, Devonshire and had written to John Williams asking him whether there was "in any remote and solitary situation a house to let for a time with the prospect of purchase when [his] affairs" would permit. He had been away from Mary, then, more than a month She begs to be with him on his birthday, August 4 "Pray, pray, do not stay away from me! . I most earnestly and with tearful eyes beg that I may come to you, if you do not like to leave the searches after a house" But her real worry emerges "Pray is Clara with you? for I have inquired several times and no letters, but seriously, it would not in the least surprise me, if you have written to her from London and let her know that you are without me, that she should have taken some such freak"[10] This is, as John Harrington Smith says, the letter

[8] *Shelley and Mary*, pp 77-78
[9] *Ibid*, p 80
[10] *Ibid*, pp 83-84

of a woman handling her mate with gloves There was a good reason for this Mary was in her third month of pregnancy and she did not dare risk desertion now She recalled to him the anniversary of their elopement and his birthday, she suggested an excursion to Tintern Abbey, and she never once intimated that if Claire were with him, it was his fault She won for a time, and Claire was left to begin her pursuit of Byron

Another letter, never before printed in full, reveals her in the January of 1817 still anxious and worried about Claire just after the birth of Allegra

Bath, Jan 17, 1817

My sweet Love

You were born to be a don Quixote and if that celebrated personage had ever existed except in the brain of Cervantes I should certainly form a theory of transmigration to prove that you lived in Spain some hundred years before & fought with Windmills You were very good in this except in one thing – which was sitting up all night – which indeed you ought not to do especially when you are so fagged all day

I wait for the Chancellor's decision with anxiety and yet with great hope – Take care of your own health, sweet love & all will go well – you wish to be accurate and to give me the very words of Basil M but unfortunately that was the only part of your letter of which I did not understand a single word – Part of it was covered with the seal & the rest nearly illegible

If you have not sent the nipple shield for Clare pray send it without fail by to nights mail as she is in great want of it – send also a pretty book for me Hunt has some old romances – of King Arthur & the Seven Champions I would take great care of them if he would send them to me – & pray ask Papa for a nice history that I can get here for I am in sad want for books to read in the sick chamber – But pray send the thing for Clare if you have not sent it already which I trust you have The baby [Allegra] is well

Blue eyes – [William] gets dearer and sweeter every day – he jumps about like a little squirrel and stares at the baby [Allegra] with his great eyes –

We have had weather – & I am when I think at all – in wretched spirits come back with good news my best absent love & we shall be happy – never before have you been so long away – it is very melancholy Is Saturday the day certainly – oh that it were past and it were post time Sunday – But I am afraid you will not have time to write much that day – if so pray send a parcel by the mail Sunday enclosing news & a lb of green & 2 lb of black tea – for if I have to wait until teusday I shall be quite sick with expectation

Adieu best & dearest – Clare writes today & directs to Longdills – have you sent Mrs Hoopers money pray send me word

– and if you have not pray do or we shall have another very dangerous visit from Mary H

Send me news of your protegeé Clare writes I entreat you most earnestly & anxiously to take care how you answer it – Be kind but make no promises & above all do not say a word that may imply any responsibility on your part for her future actions – I shall most likely not see your letter but I shall be very anxious for its contents for you are warmhearted & indeed sweetest very indiscreet – Pardon this but pray attend to it Have you given Mrs G money for your night shirts do not lose any clothes – dearest adieu be well & happy but remember a white mouses advise –

Yours tenderly
M W S

It is evident, however, that "this strange and most incredible situation" as Professor White terms it, did not cause a permanent alienation from Hogg any more than did Claire later alienate Shelley from Byron, however much she tried As late as January 1818 Shelley, in the following letter, just as "incredible," wrote to Hogg

January, 1818

My dear Friend

I shall be very happy to see you again, and to give you your share of our common treasure of which you have been cheated for several days

The Maie knows how highly you prize this exquisite possession, and takes occasion to quiz you in saying that it is necessary for her to absent from London, for your sensibility to its value Do not fear We will not again be deprived of this participated pleasure

I did all the requisite acts at Longdill's yesterday at one o'clock and returned immediately to the Pecksie I could not persuade her to come to London

Very affectionately yours,
P B Shelley

Like Dowden, when confronted by the choice between biographical integrity to the record and biographical reticence, biographers continue to choose the latter on the mistaken assumption that Shelley and Mary must be defended against themselves and that the legend of their unbroken harmony from the time of their elopement must be perpetuated They do not understand that defense by suppressing the record is not only specious but unnecessary, and that the daily account in the journals speaks more eloquently for Shelley, Mary, and Claire, misguided by doctrine though they may have been, than the falsifications and mealy-mouthed apologetics of their biographers Let us not, therefore, out of a false delicacy suppress the "kiss" and the

"garters", but permit our readers to perceive the tragi-comic futility of this Hogg-Mary-Shelley-Claire "experiment", and to understand why Byron and Landor thought Mary a "vulgar" woman and Hogg found her an "indiscreet" one

Mary, like Shelley, at this time, in accordance with the doctrine, loved Shelley no less because she also loved Hogg Quite fervently she believed, as *Political Justice* had told her, and as her mother and Godwin had preached, that love should be universal, that, as her husband put it, "to divide was not to take away" That she ceased wholly to believe in the doctrine later, however circumspect she became, is also uncertain, at least she took no high moral tone of disapproval, but was rather the prime mover (as also revealed in the Gordon letters) in bringing the lonely Jane Williams and Hogg together for their relatively felicitous if unconventional union of many years

It was a doctrine, however, that Mary could not sustain when she discovered that Shelley was becoming too much absorbed in Claire She first tried to exclude her from the trinity of Shelley, Mary, and Hogg, but finding that this scheme did not work, she entered upon the fierce struggle for possession of Shelley which resulted at first in a very near victory for Claire, who was just as eager to possess Shelley completely. For days he was away from Mary, she did not hear from him, and she was probably quite right in suspecting that he was living with Claire and so much absorbed in her that he did not even return to Mary for his birthday The significant aftermath of this struggle for the possession of Shelley was Mary's victory and his return to her, but at a very great price during the rest of her life with him, for Claire in rash rivalry, to captivate a more famous poet, plunged for compensation into her ill-starred conquest of Byron, with the result that Mary had Claire on her hands all the rest of her days with Shelley Both women paid sorely for their efforts to coerce love, and learned through much suffering the fallaciousness for them of the doctrine that "to divide is not to take away"

Hogg and Mary After Shelley's Death

One of Mary's first efforts in her bewilderment after Shelley's death was to secure again the friendship of Hogg As she did not know whether to return to England or to stay in Italy, she asked everybody's advice Byron advised her, because of the inheritance and the social status, to give up her child to Sir Timothy and Lady Shelley, just as Claire had rendered her little girl, Allegra, to him Lord Byron's letter to Sir Timothy had moved the stubborn baronet to promise the boy "a suitable, though limited maintenance" if Mary would surrender him After all, from Lord Byron's Regency point of view, it was the duty of a gentleman to look after the family illegitimates (as Sir Anthony regarded Shelley's children by Mary), and Sir Timothy

could not ignore the representations of a noble lord Mary could not bear the thought, however, of parting with "my boy" Perhaps she remembered, too, what had happened to Allegra under Byron's care, and Claire's prolonged misery She, therefore, sought Hogg's advice in the following 2016-word letter—so filled with self-pity, lamentations to high Heaven over her loss, and other sentimental effusions that Hogg's impulse must have been to run like a deer in the opposite direction She tried to reassure him that she was not the harum-scarum girl of 1815, that she had come to see the error of her conduct with him and to ask his pardon, evidently for the ill terms on which they had parted

Feb 28, 1823

T Jefferson Hogg, Esq 1 Garden Court Temple London
Postmarks Genova Fpo Mr 13, 1823

My dear Friend,

I am truly obliged to you for the Message that you sent me through Mrs Williams "you have not the heart to write me" – no wonder! Miserable wreck as I am – left from the destruction of the noblest fabric of humanity to tell of it – to mourn over it – and mark its ruin – who can visit me even in thought without a shudder – who can communicate with me without being shadowed by the misery which penetrates me Our divine Shelley has left me, my dear Jefferson, your fellow collegiate, one who always loved you – the best – but to you I need not praise him

I do not write to you merely to pour forth the bitterness of my spirit Although our connection was marked by storms, and circumstances led often into erroneous conduct with regard to you, yet now bereft of all, I willingly turn to my Shelley's dearest friend, and to one whom I am persuaded notwithstanding all thinks kindly of me I write to ask your advice I believe you know my character sufficiently to be aware how deeply it is tinged with irresolution and an incapacity of action, even in the common occurrences of life – If I have interfered in the legislative – I have had nothing to do with the executive part of our little government – I am aghast when I have anything to *do* – but a crisis must come, and I must determine on something You must have some knowledge of my lost Shelley's Family, you will neither be actuated by prejudice or the contrary, I wish therefore to discuss my affairs with you Will you not lend me your best intelligence to aid me – for indeed I am a poor hand in these matters

When Jane returned to England I had at first determined to accompany her, thinking it necessary for my interests to be on the spot – and that when in London any application to Sir T S would be more effectual than while I was abroad Lord Byron dissuaded me from this – his arguments were shortly these

that I would spend all my money in a journey, that I had none or a very miserable home to receive me – and that all arrangements with my father-in-law could be managed as well in my absence from England Attached from a thousand reasons to this divine country, dismayed at the prospect of wretchedness that awaited me in London I readily acquiesced Lord B was executor – he promised to take the most active part in fulfilling the duties of an office he accepted He had every right to advise me So I came to Genova and have resided under the roof of the Hunts, husbanding my means, and awaiting the results of the negociations made for me

First (at my father's request) Lord B wrote to his solicitor Hanson to communicate with Whitton concerning me The result might be guessed – Sir T S would give no reply Lord B then wrote to Sir T S himself, a letter which had my approbation An answer arrived the other day After reprobating my conduct saying that he suspects me of having estranged his son's mind from the respect due to Lady S and himself (you know the parties and are aware what canting nonsense that is) he refuses to interfere in any of my concerns As for my boy, if I bring him to England, and will place him under the care of such a person as he will approve, he will afford him a suitable, tho' limited maintenance

Now this is my situation, and what shall I do? This letter found me leading a most solitary life, immersed in study, occupied by no external circumstance except the care of my darling boy – and having found in this mode of life the only balm I can conceive for the miseries I have endured At present living with the Hunts I spend little, I have still some money remaining from the sum I possessed on my arrival in Genova, I have received some money from the Liberal, and if that publication continue, shall continue regularly to receive more Such are the benefits attendant on the continuance of my present situation Peace and solitude But again L B now offers to provide means for my return to England – We may be scattered – L B will probably leave this part of the world – the Liberal may die – I cannot burthen the Hunts – I am without resource – and this future, I own, terrifies me

Shall I then come to England? – You may guess I do not make it a question whether I will part with my boy He is my all My other children I have lost, and the pangs I endured when those events happened were so terrible that even now, inured as I am to mental pain – I look back with affright to those periods of agony – I have lost my support, my friend, my chosen and only one – my tree of life is felled and I live only in the little sprout that shadows greenly its fearful ruin I could not live a day without my boy Let them persuade me that my

existence is detrimental to his future prospects and I will not burthen the earth any longer – but go to Rome and die But I live persuaded that his delicate frame requires maternal solicitude – and that in my affection and attentions he will pass a childhood of happiness, whatever evil may afterward befall him That L B should have counselled my acquiescence does not surprize me But the very idea of such doubt threw me for several days into a state of agitation I cannot describe If I go to England will they not try to force him from me? It would require force and I would die in the struggle – but one cannot look forward to such a contest with equanimity But other ideas suggest themselves Lord B will (as you suggested) write to Lord Holland to interest himself for me – If on my arrival in England Sir T S finds me protected by people whose rank he respects he may consider me a fitting person to have the charge of my infant I wish his childhood to be prosperous Italian skies of themselves shed prosperity – but looking towards England we cannot find that except in the mansions of the rich – and one wishes that he should be properly recognized and protected by his father's family They will of course be much more prejudiced against me than they are, if I, unprotected, young and tieless, reside abroad – out of their English pale – the sanctuary of virtue and propriety – They will look on me indeed as a black-black sheep if I do not hasten to place myself beneath all the benefits of their clouded atmosphere and foggy virtue – I shall be daparagonare with the Queen alone

I love Italy – its sky canopies the tombs of my lost treasures – its sun – its vegetation – the solitude I can here enjoy – the easy life one can lead – my habits now of five years growth – and and everything endears Italy to me beyond expression The thought of leaving it fills me with painful tumults – tears come into my eyes – I prognosticate all evils Yet if I stay how very desolate I may become – The Hunts are very kind – but they are poor Hunt in his generous nature is delighted to be of use to me – and I am not too proud to accept an obligation, gratitude is to me a pleasing feeling – but I shrink from linking my fate too closely – and then I would not for worlds burthen them If I should be left alone – without the means of proceeding to England I thought that I ought to follow Lord B's advice in staying, ought I not not [sic] follow it in going? though his idea that I ought to part with mine own Shelley's babe invalidates his advice – Could I ever cease to find my sole comfort in having him perpetually with me – watching – watching the dawnings of his mind, inspiring him with due respect for his unequalled father, and spreading joy over his infant years? What! shall I proclaim myself unworthy to have the care of my boy? – Never

Even if I could live and do it I would not – and if I were persuaded that I ought then I should die

If you are at all acquainted with the Entail of my Shelley's property you best know what confidence I may put in the validity of his will If that will stand I shall be rich one day, and the present moment alone is to be provided for If that stands my boy's fortune will depend on me and I become in every way his fitting guardian

Again – I arrive in England poor to nothingness – I reside (even if that can be) in my father's house – poverty and misery around me – anxious care – but that must be mine wherever I am

Yet my present life is a peaceful one I see little even of those with whom I live – that is not their fault, but mine I study – I write – I think even to madness and torture of the past – I look forward to the grave with hope – but in exerting my intellect – in forcing myself to real study – I find an opiate which at least adds nothing to the pain of regret that must necessarily be mine forever

Thus, my dear Jefferson, I send you a true picture of my situation you can shew it to Mrs Williams and she may help you to understand it Again I appeal to you for your counsel – what shall I do? Consider that my child's interest is the question to be solved – I would do all, sacrifice all for him What is best for him, is best for me Let that consideration guide you all sacrifice will be light to me made for his benefit – Study, tranquillity – Italy and all its gentle airs may go to the winds, if that they should, be best for him – care – poverty – and the ills of England will be welcome to me if they conduce to his benefit I will do all but part with him – though if that should be necessary (but it is not) I would die – but what child could be benefited by the death of a mother whose life hangs upon his

Pardon me that I have thus troubled you Pardon me that I recall to your memory and force your attention to a hapless being – who since she last saw you has been tamed by every misery under the sun, and who hopeless and wishless of any good in this life, prays daily for death when her life is no longer useful to the only tie that remains for her Sorrow came upon me in my youth – and now still young – I have lost all even to wishing for My only relief is the exercise of my mind, the improvement [of] my understanding and the acquirement of knowledge I fear and fly society – my child is my sole companion – I wish only for this grave like tranquillity, if it be consistent with his prospects – and if indeed it can in any way continue under the present circumstances

If I return to England I shall see you and in talking to not live a day without my boy Let them persuade me that my

> tions that I can expect to find in that country I do not think that you will find me what I was, but tamed to submission to my har[s]h fate, grateful for kindness and as full of affection as one devoted to the past, and future beyond life – and looking on the present as a dark passage that must be gone through – tolerant – fearful – easily agitated but still reserved and diffident – what more? I have talked long enough of myself – if you see me again you will judge for yourself – if not, still think with kindness of the selected and chosen one of your friend, his constant companion and truest, perpetual mourner – As one whom I believe to have been most sincerely attached to him – As the spectator of the first years I spent with him, I must ever turn to you as a true friend
>
> Most sincerely yours,
> Mary Shelley
>
> Albaro – near Genoa
> February 28th

He was by no means convinced by Mary's effusion, his lawyer's caution was aroused, he did not believe in the change she described and he made no reply, for Mary complained later that she never received an answer He explained through Jane Williams that he had neglected to write to Mary at Shelley's death because he had "not the heart to write". He was stoutly of the opinion, which he conveyed to everybody else, that Mary should stay in Italy Through Jane Williams and her friends he used every argument he could think of to persuade Mary not to come to England Perhaps it would not be unfair to say that he did not wish her on his hands He pointed out that she could not endure living with the Godwins, that Sir Timothy would not support her, that she could not earn money enough by her pen, and he went so far as to hope that Trelawny and Byron would not furnish her money for the trip The principal reason, however, he conveyed in a letter to Jane

> Her want of conduct will injure her cause, she has not discretion enough to make the tribute, which the world demands in England (and I suppose in all other places) from the natives light and easy, that is *to appear* to live like other people [11]

When she finally decided against his advice and returned, she complained again of the long interval before either Hogg or Peacock came to call Eventually Hogg sent her a letter, and when he perceived that he had been wrong and that she had learned to adapt herself to the rigors of Victorian etiquette[12]

[11] Sylva Norman, *After Shelley*, p 10

[12] How quickly Regency immorals changed to Victorian morals, long before Victoria, has been disclosed in M J Quinlan's able dissertation, *Victorian Prelude*, Columbia University Press, 1941

he renewed the friendship and accepted Mary's suggestion to write Shelley memoirs As we shall see, Mary was delighted with Hogg's account of the Oxford days

Though skilled as Mary became in meeting the demands of society and successful in redeeming the name of Shelley, she was still, in spite of her protestations and sentimentalities over her "lost Shelley", at times the coquette, both as victor and victim (John Howard Payne, Washington Irving, Robert Dale Owen, Prosper Merimée and Gatteschi), and never, like Claire, did she turn for refuge to a stereotyped or institutional morality, as her encouragement and approval of Hogg's union with Jane Williams is eloquent witness Her experiences had left her fundamentally tolerant and kindly (witness her devotion to the Hunts) though woefully oppressed at times by melancholy and ill health

Her wholesale complaint of neglect and lack of friendly support, however, in an unpublished letter of advice to Isabel Baxter Booth, reveals the depression of her last years, and her inability to evaluate what she had received

16 April [1847]

Pray tell me that you
burn my letters & burn
this – or I cannot
write – I have such a
horror of letters surviving
& with reason

My dear Isabel,

Your letter has made me reflect on advice I gave with regard to coming to England – You say in it that you do not like to let miss the period when the friends of Mr Booth might exert themselves for you – & you mention Ld Brougham – & you think there are others – & that your personal presence wd inspire interest – & that you could be of use to yourself – & that others would serve you –

I have advised against your coming to town – as a great expense to end in nothing – but I may not be a fair judge – I am depressed by a long illness – incapable of any active exertion – my mind is so influenced by the nature of my malady that if I turn my thoughts to any business, I become ill directly

And then my experience has been so sad – I never found a friend to be of any active use to me When I think of my melancholy return to England in 23 & the natural interest one would suppose a young widow with an infant son – the heir to a good fortune might have inspired – & the solitude & friendlessness of my position When I think of the exertions I made when Percy was 21 to introduce him into active life – & not a human being wd hold out a finger – nay wd not show the inexpensive kindness

of an invitation or a kind glance you may guess that I never hope any thing from the kindness & helpfulness of my fellow creatures – & that for you to come to London seems to me to come to a solitude more dreary than the deserts of Arabia – far more dreary

But all this may have resulted from my peculiar position & none of this may touch you I have found hopeful enterprizes often succeed – so only take my advice for its worth – the result of a life of experience in solitude – unkindness mortification & disappointment – ending in a lonely sick room So be guided, dear Isabel, by your own experience rather than mine if you have friends – or Mr Booth had who really have served & who will serve – call on them & pray God they answer as they ought

I am getting well I am told & indeed I am – but the long confinement has thrown me into a state of great dejection & there is a gloom over my future which considering my many blessings is very unreasonable – yet which to any one acquainted with the reality of my position is very natural – I sigh to get away from this odious London – but absolute solitude in the country frightens me – we shall see how it will be – I am to leave London as soon as my health will permit for the sea side

I have not received the book – the grammar & compositer Pray send them to me More is quite out of the question for such sort of books – some one else must be applied to I hope Mr. Bethuin [?] has given undeniable tokens of the deep interest and great esteem he professed for you

Ever Affectionately[13]
M S

Mary's malady caused her excruciating agony during the last years of her life, traces of nervous exhaustion being visible in her papers as early as 1836 It is ironic that she did not find more satisfaction out of what she had achieved since her arrival in England, but then she had been constantly badgered by a succession of men eager to exploit in print Shelley's magic name, Medwin, Trelawny, and especially the indefatigable Major Byron, who, as the letter to Mrs Booth indicates, filled Mary with a just fear of surviving letters She found the road to recognition of Shelley harder than she had expected, her provocations to cast as fair a light as she could over her early relations with Shelley—even at the expense of Harriet—were very great Nothing could be further from the truth than her statement in the Booth letter "I never found a friend to be of any active use to me"

When we think of the unstinted kindness of Trelawny, Hunt, Hogg, and Peacock in her behalf after Shelley's death, of Byron's efforts with Sir Timothy, and the cordial reception she received among the literati on her return, we cannot conclude with her in retrospect that she never had a useful friend or

[13] Printed through the courtesy of The Rosenbach Company

that England was wholly "a dreary common and a bare sky" To expect that she and her son would be received in the bosoms of Sir Timothy and Lady Shelley and warmly greeted by the run of conservative gentry was too much She was too depressed to remember that the Honorable Mrs. Norton, always a gracious and resplendent lady, secured for her the pension she desired for her step-mother, the always indigent and least deserving second Mrs Godwin She had the satisfaction of finding a haven for many years with Sir Percy, who, though he was no shining light in Parliament, was always devoted and took her on her rambles in Europe, and she could not have found a more loyal and devoted daughter-in-law to her or to Shelley's memory She might have seen, if her final misery had not prevented, that "beneath all the benefits of their clouded atmosphere and foggy virtue", as she characterized her countrymen, they had treated her handsomely, that at the end she had achieved the difficult mission she had set out to achieve after Shelley's death —to change the execration of Shelley to the worship of Shelley

Hogg's Biography of Shelley

As for Hogg, he did not dismiss his friendship with Shelley as a youthful folly Just as Trelawny was forever talking and writing about Shelley to Claire, Hogg was forever reminiscing about Shelley to Jane as "our incomparable friend," "our dear super-human friend," "our dear Shelley" He wrote to Jane, "I have sent you twelve from the numerous letters of our Shelley to be read at your leisure"[14] That curious desire to monopolize Shelley, with which all his friends seemed to be afflicted, was evident in more than the conversation of Hogg He promised to send Jane two works of Shelley's which she had never seen, but he made her swear not to show them to Mary, "because she will tease my life out to see them, I am not sure that I will shew them to her"[15]

But he waited ten years before he wrote about his friend Of Medwin, he had written in September, 1824

> Selling the memory of a friend to a bookseller is to me, resurrectionlike measure, and resembles selling his body to the Surgeons for dissection I suppose M has no such scruples of delicacy[16]

Finally, Mary persuaded him to describe his Oxford days with Shelley In another effort to bring Shelley favorably before the public, Mary

[14] *After Shelley The Letters of Thomas Jefferson Hogg to Jane Williams* Edited, with a Biographical Introduction, by Sylva Norman London, Oxford University Press, 1934, page 8

[15] *Ibid*, page 31

[16] *Ibid*, page 30

introduced Hogg to the editor of the *New Monthly Magazine,* E L Bulwer, in 1832 In the Preface to his *Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley,* Hogg says

> No definite arrangement was ever made with his [Shelley's] family for giving a full and authentic account of his innocent and imaginative life It was agreed, however, that by way of commencement, I should relate in some periodical, as much as I could remember of those happy days which we spent together at Oxford [17]

The article appeared in the February, 1932 issue of the magazine after Hogg had been compelled to make changes in the manuscript E L Bulwer explained how he had revised Hogg's article

> Now, what I omitted in your paper, and what I altered, were chiefly passages in which I could not agree with you (about Oxford, and persons in Oxford, for instance), a few verbal changes occurred also – but they were chiefly epithets and phrases, in which I thought a little exaggeration, natural to description and to friendship, had crept in I dwell the more on this, because I have not yet done more than glance over a few lines in your second paper and I there see that your natural affection for Shelley carries you a little beyond that estimate of what he has left to the world, which as yet we are authorised to express It is probable that this strain may be continued throughout the whole, and therefore requires modification In regard to the proposed article on his Poetry I fear that we should not agree You evidently admire him as a poet far more than I think criticism warrants us in doing [18]

This was a sample of the way the *New Monthly Magazine* hacked and hewed the manuscripts to cut them to the political and social views of its readers, just as Gifford in *The Quarterly Review* was hewing to the Tory line Though to submit to official discipline was not to Hogg's liking, he modified his opinions and style More articles were supposed to appear in the magazine, but they were discontinued to make room for Lady Blessington's memoirs So Hogg maintained in the letter he wrote later to Lady Shelley.

If the results did not satisfy Hogg, they pleased Mary Recalling his reminiscences, she wrote to Edward Moxon on July 14, [1841].

> . . What I should like would be if Mr Hogg would write an Essay on Shelley's life, and writings . Perhaps you would see him and learn what it would cost, & then I would write to him & arrange it on my own account . . [19]

[17] Hogg, Thomas Jefferson, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* London, Edward Moxon, 1858, vol I, p xiv

[18] *Ibid*, pp xvi-xvii

[19] Wise, Thomas J, *A Shelley Library* London, Printed for Private Circulation Only, 1924, pp 113-114

Altho no such biography appeared in Mary's lifetime, her wish was remembered by Lady Shelley Unaware of Bulwer's cancelled epithets and cynical commentary, she wrote to Hogg in an undated letter

> Some few years ago when we had the pleasure of seeing you at Boscombe [both Jane and Hogg had visited there] you expressed a regret that no life had been written worthy of Shelley
>
> The only person who could do this with any degree of truth is his early college friend, Jefferson Hogg, the author of several papers entitled "Percy Bysshe Shelley at Oxford" and published in the *New Monthly Magazine* of February 1, 1832
>
> He, too, is the only person whom we could allow to look over our private papers and letters which are most necessary, if such a work should be attempted [20]

Hogg was willing, and she kept her promise Hogg says

> All Shelley's journals, letters, fragments, every scrap of paper indeed relating to him or to his affairs, whether it was written by himself, or by other persons, have been placed in my hands and at my disposal by his family, my materials are at once authentic and abundant This is much, but it will be far more, to write a living Life of the young Poet, to give of him a breathing, moving, speaking portrait [21]

With this unexampled opportunity—never was Lady Shelley so generous to biographers again – it is tragic that he changed the wording of some of the letters and classified a letter unfavorable to himself as part of an unfinished novel, thus laying himself open to the charge of "editorial infidelity"

Most of the changes consisted of pronoun reversals which completely altered the sense of the context The most serious editorial change, however, was the printing of Shelley's letter to him about his attempted seduction of Harriet as a *Fragment of a Novel,* for Harriet's name Charlotte's was substituted as if the article were a continuation of Goethe's *Werther*

Twenty-one letters from Hogg to Lady Shelley are in existence which reveal how cordial and familiar their relations were from the spring of 1857 to the spring of 1858 "Dearest Wrennie" he addressed her and signed himself "Dah" The publication of the first two volumes in 1858 brought a sudden termination to this cosy relationship. Great was the consternation of Sir Percy and Lady Shelley when the picture of Shelley appeared, not as the divine poet and the charming and talented eccentric of Hoggs early Shelley papers but as a caricature, desecrated by aspersions on his truthfulness and by hints about his conquests of women

[20] Sotheran Catalogue, Piccadilly Notes, No 13, 1934
[21] Hogg, *op cit*, p xxv

A cold note from Sir Percy requested Hogg to return all his materials and manuscripts, for editing, so that any passage could be erased "which in my opinion may tend to throw discredit and ridicule upon the memories of my father and mother" This is an early declaration of how Sir Percy and Lady Shelley intended to control the use of their materials so that Mary Shelley's portrait of the "divine poet" should prevail in all subsequent biography

Passages like the following in Hogg's two volumes, which were certain to receive the approval of Shelley's friends because of their truth, could give nothing but mortal offense to Sir Percy and Lady Shelley

> Shelley was fugitive, volatile, he evaporated like ether, his nature being ethereal, he suddenly escaped, like some fragrant essence, evanescent as a quintessence He was a lovely, a graceful image, but fading, vanishing speedily from our sight, being portrayed in flying colours He was a climber, a creeper, an elegant, beautiful oderiferous parasitical plant, he could not support himself, he must be tied up fast to something of a firmer texture, harder and more rigid than his own pliant yielding structure, to some person of a less flexible formation he always required a prop [22]

Hogg maintained that Shelley's imagination colored more than his poetry

> Shelley's letters to William Godwin must be received with caution, the young poet saw events through the spectacles of his pregnant and prurient fancy, and not as they really wore
>
> He was altogether incapable of rendering an account of any transaction whatsoever, according to the strict and precise truth, and the bare, naked realities of actual life, not through an addiction to falsehood, which he cordially detested, but because he was the creature, the unsuspecting and resisting victim, of his irresistible imagination
>
> Had he written to ten different individuals the history of some proceeding in which he was himself a party, and an eye-witness, each of his ten reports would have varied from the rest in essential and important circumstances The relation given on the morrow would be unlike that of the day, as the latter would contradict the tale of yesterday [23]

For Shelley's illness Hogg offered psychological causes

> Whenever he was hard pressed, his poetical imagination invented the touching fable of a delicate and dangerous state of health, his robust microcosm became in an instant the theatre

[22] *Ibid*, Vol II, p 46
[23] *Ibid*, Vol II, p 68

> of dire disease, spasms, consumptions, breakings of blood-vessels, veins, and arteries, crowded thickly upon him, as a pretence for undertaking what he eagerly desired, but felt to be imprudent and improper [24]

Nothing it appeared was sacred to Hogg When he discussed the Newtons and their air-baths, he approached the subject with his usual half-smile

> Except on my first visit, the dear children never appeared naked before me, before Bysshe they often did It is for his credit's sake that I state it I was of the earth, earthy, he was of the heaven, heavenly,—I was a worldling, he had already returned to nature, or rather he had never quitted her He was a pure spirit, in the Divine likeness of the Archangel Gabriel, the peace-breathing, lily-bearing, Annunciator Whether the charming lady might not, without tarnish or discredit, have appeared before him robed only in her innocency, as she was wont to sit during the early morning hours, I will not presume to determine, it is, at all events, certain that she never did so [25]

Occasionally he descended to vulgarity of expression

> Although I did not visit the young cock bird in his breeding cage, during the few weeks he inhabited it, I sometimes met him at the house of our common friends, and several times in particular at the adjacent lodgings of the lady friend, [Mrs Boinville] for whose sake he had emigrated to Pimlico She was an amiable and accomplished old lady, and tolerably agreeable, but too much of the French school to be quite so, and the greater part of her associates were odious I generally found there two or three sentimental young butchers, an eminently philosophical tinker, and several very unsophisticated medical practitioners, or medical students, all of low origin, and vulgar and offensive manners They sighed, turned up their eyes, retailed philosophy, such as it was, and swore by William Godwin and Political Justice, acting, moreover, and very clumsily, the parts of Petrarchs, Werthers, St Leons, and Fleetwoods [26]

It may have been the summing up of Shelley's character that disturbed Lady Shelley most, as she always undertook to explain to people that when Shelley said he loved a woman he did not love an actual woman· he only loved love [27]

> Shelley [writes Hogg] was great as a poet-divine, indeed, great as a philosopher, as a moralist, as a scholar, as a com-

[24] *Ibid*, Vol II, p 111
[25] *Ibid*, Vol II, p 294
[26] *Ibid*, Vol II, p 462-463
[27] Rolleston, Maud, *Talks with Lady Shelley* London, George G Harrap and Company, Ltd, 1925, p 77

> plete and finished gentleman, great in every respect as a man, but he was most conspicuously great in that particular excellence, which, in all ages and in all nations, has been invariably the characteristic distinction of mankind – he was preeminently a lady's man The following pages will show but faintly, feebly, and imperfectly I fear, that he was uniformly the chosen favourite of the charming sex The moment he entered a house, he inspired the most lively interest into every woman in the family, not only the mistress of the house, her daughters and other lady relatives, but even the housekeeper and the humblest females in the establishment were animated by an active desire to promote and secure his well-being in every way and to the utmost in their power In England women have never had too much influence in advancing the fortunes of men, commonly too little, far too little, for the public welfare It was always a maxim in France, and a wise one, that no man could succeed greatly in life who was not a favourite with the fair The young Poet's fortunes would certainly have been less rude – they would have been mitigated, and softened, and brightened, if a due preponderance had been conceded to the gentle and humanising patronage and fond devotion of his countless lady-friends [28]

For Lady Shelley this must have been bitter medicine from the "husband' of Jane Williams, who had once boasted of her power over Shelley With the elopement to be dealt with, the suicides of Fanny Imlay and Harriet Shelley, what might not happen with Claire Clairmont and Emilia Viviani? Accordingly the Shelleys withdrew the papers and obtained an injunction against Hogg to prevent further publication of the projected two volumes Yet as late as 1862 Hogg wrote to a lawyer friend, Mr Hoskyns Abrahall, that he might complete the life of Shelley [29] The third volume was completed when Hogg died in 1862 Its publication was planned by his brother and executor, John Hogg Sir Percy gave consent and wrote to a representative of Moxon's on May 26, 1864 that he expected the volume to come out "next season."[30] But the volume never appeared. In 1872 William Rossetti met Jane Williams Hogg at Trelawny's and reported that she had not read the manuscript, "treating as it does of matters painful to her in reminiscence This would seem to imply that the narrative is brought down to Shelley's death, but I did not press any question on that point."[31] Sylva

[28] Hogg, *op cit*, Vol I, pp xxiii-xxiv

[29] Medwin, Thomas, *A Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* Edited and revised by H Buxton Forman London, Oxford University Press, 1913, pp 88-9 n 1

[30] Norman, *op cit*, p xxxiii

[31] Dowden, Edward, Garnett, Richard, and Rossetti, William Michael, *Letters about Shelley* Interchanged by Three Friends Edited with an introduction by Richard Garnett, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1917, p 55

Norman, in her Preface to *After Shelley,* conjectures "Somewhere must be a folio album of documents prepared by a son of Jane's daughter, Rosalind"[32] There is reason to believe that Hogg's manuscript is in existence

Lady Shelley ran feverishly to Peacock, to Hunt, to Garnett, when she saw how Hogg, in his two volumes dedicated to her, had abused the "delicate and difficult" task she had asked him to undertake The injunction, for which the Shelleys and Peacock applied, stopped Hogg, but the mischief he had done had still to be remedied She was not satisfied with Peacock's temperate treatment of Hogg in a review of the book in *Fraser's Magazine* for June, 1858 His avowed purpose in writing the review had been stated in a letter to Claire, May 12, 1858

> My purpose in undertaking the article for Fraser's is first to protest against this very system of biographical gossip, second to present an outline clear of all offence to the living, third to correct errors where they appear to me to occur in the narrative under review[33]

What Lady Shelley wanted was an impassioned denial of all the insinuations in the work "Have you seen Peacock's review in the new Fraser?" she wrote to Leigh Hunt, June 3 "It is well done, but I have never yet seen Hogg handled according to his just deserts" She planned to arrange the materials with a connecting narrative and wanted Hunt's help This book was to appear before the remaining two volumes by Hogg, as the injunction had probably not yet been obtained Sir Percy added a postscript. "I am not sure whether it is clear from what she says that all we want is a letter from you as short or as long as you like to insert in the book we mean to publish."[34]

Hunt, who depended upon the Shelley family for his annuity of £120, complied by attacking not the book but Hogg himself. On July 2, he wrote to the Shelleys

> Hogg had long been thought very eccentric by those who are in the habit of knowing, or even of seeing him, and if there were any melancholy in his madness, or I considered the combination probable, or his mind, in its last recesses, movable out of that excess of self-complacency which is the very essence of his disorder, I would much rather have said nothing at all on the subject than write what I do now But he will have all the helps which illusions of self-love can give him Being, furthermore, not a sincere man himself, he will try hard to think me insincere, in what I have been saying, and this will double his re-assurance.[35]

[32] Norman, *op cit*, p v
[33] Wise, *op cit*, p 119
[34] *Hunt's Letter on Hogg's "Life of Shelley" with Other Papers,* Cedar Rapids, Iowa, privately printed, 1927, pp 9-11
[35] *Ibid*, p 14

Hunt then went on to describe Hogg's fits of anger and "restorative paroxysms of self-idolatry"

He sympathized with Lady Shelley and understood how Hogg could have persuaded her that he was a "gentleman" Hogg's manner had been "submissive, shy-looking, and soft-spoken"

> Luckily the combination of envy and vanity in Hogg carry him into excesses, that while they betray his malice render it harmless by their absurdity Thus his success at the bar not being commensurate he thinks with his deserts, and being at a loss how to express the extremity of his rage with the contemporaries who have surpassed him, he casts about in his mind what coarsest thing he can possibly invent to their annoyance [36]

He charged that Hogg was jealous of literary men whose work was praised while his went unnoticed

> He is a scholar of the verbal order, more shewy than substantial He is a mere cynical man of the world, sentimental, and romantic in nothing but the tenderest love for himself and the most extravagant notions of his claims to consideration because he happened to be at college with a great man I trust you do not suppose that such a man .. can do any harm to such a memory as your father's [37]

His last word on the subject appeared August 28, 1859, in connection with a notice of Lady Shelley's *Shelley Memorials* Intent on proving that the attempted assassination at Tanyrallt really happened, Hunt wrote "During all the years in which I knew him, [Shelley] I never once observed in his conversation the smallest departure from matter of fact"[38]

He concluded his article

> A caution against belief in any letters not countenanced by indisputable authority, and explaining whence they came and through whose hands (for spurious ones, ever since his death, have been sold in all directions, and often greedily accepted), has justly been added to other warnings in his behalf [39]

He begged the readers to extend justice to Shelley's memory and not to expect a complete biography at this time On the delicate question of Shelley's being a lady's man he did not touch at all His defense of the Shelley Legend probably was the last thing Hunt wrote before he died

[36] *Ibid*, p 18
[37] *Ibid*, p 22
[38] *Ibid*, p 30
[39] *Ibid*, p 32

Lady Shelley and Shelley Memorials

Shelley Memorials, supposedly written by Lady Shelley but generally accepted as written by Richard Garnett,[40] presents the picture of Shelley she wished the world to accept as final and definitive As we have seen, Hogg had not approached "with reverent steps and slow" the idol of Field Place, and his biography was heresy to Lady Shelley. Her letter to Hunt shows that the Shelley family had not yet obtained the injunction against Hogg, for she wrote "We are anxious this book should appear at the same time or a little before the other two volumes of Hogg"[41] Therefore we must conclude that she wrote the *Memorials* to counteract any unfavorable opinion of Shelley that might result from Hogg's discussion of the separation from Harriet, and the elopement with Mary She was determined that the elopement must by no means appear to be the cause of the separation, the separation must follow logically from causes inherent in the marriage, and the blame must be shown to lie with Harriet She was to stress these points with all subsequent biographers that came under her sway

> From Shelley's own account, and from other sources of information which have since transpired, this unfortunate marriage seems to have been thus brought about
>
> To the wild eloquence of the enthusiast, who claimed it as his mission to regenerate the world, and to give it freedom from the shackles which had been too long endured, and which barred its progress to indefinite perfectibility, Harriet had in their many interviews in London bent a well-pleased ear, and when the day came for her return to her Brompton seminary, these new lights seemed to her mind to have a practical bearing on the forms and discipline of her boarding-school She therefore petitioned her father to be allowed to remain at home On his refusal, she wrote to Shelley, and, in a sad and evil hour for both, this girl, "who had thrown herself upon his protection" and "with whom he was not in love," became his wife [42]

Although Lady Shelley uses the words in the second set of double quotation marks for evidence, she adds this footnote "These expressions are quoted from some published letters, the authenticity of which I am not

[40] Power, Julia *Shelley in America in the Nineteenth Century,* The University Studies of the University of Nebraska, Vol XL, No 2, Lincoln, published by the University, 1940, p 155

[41] *Leigh Hunt's Letter on Hogg's "Life of Shelley",* Cedar Rapids, privately printed, 1927, p 10

[42] Shelley, Lady (Jane), *Shelley Memorials from Authentic Sources,* Boston, Ticknor and Fields, 1859, pp 29-30

able to guarantee "[43] Although she warned against belief in the quotations, she was willing to publish them This is similar to the occasion when she accepted Hogg's alleged slander of Peacock, yet repudiated Hogg as an accurate biographer of Shelley.

Determined to show that the cause of the elopement lay in Shelley's own household, Lady Shelley writes of Eliza, Harriet's sister.

> During their residence in the latter town [York], a new intimate was added to their circle in the person of the elder Miss Westbrook – a visitor whose presence was in many respects unfortunate From strength of character and disparity of years (for she was much older than Harriet), she exercised a strong influence over her sister, and this influence was used without much discretion, and with little inclination to smooth the difficulties or promote the happiness of the young couple.[44]

Later, she quotes Peacock's words

> The child [Ianthe] had a wet-nurse whom he did not like, and was much looked after by his wife's sister, whom he intensely disliked I have often thought that, if Harriet had nursed her own child, and if this sister had not lived with them, the link of their married love would not have been so readily broken [45]

She offers, however, no proof of the estrangement, but states flatly.

> Toward the close of 1813, estrangements, which for some time had been slowly growing between Mr and Mrs Shelley came to a crisis Separation ensued, and Mrs Shelley returned to her father's house Here she gave birth to her second child, – a son who died in 1826
>
> The occurrences of this painful epoch in Shelley's life, and of the causes which led to them, I am spared from relating In Mary Shelley's own words – This is not the time to relate the truth, and I should reject any colouring of the truth No account of these events has ever been given at all approaching reality in their details, either as regards himself or others, nor shall I further allude to them than to remark that the errors of action committed by a man as noble and generous as Shelley, may, as far as he only is concerned, be fearlessly avowed by those who loved him, in the firm conviction that, were they judged impartially, his character would stand in fairer and brighter light than that of any contemporary.[46]

[43] *Ibid*, p 30
[44] *Ibid*, p 30
[45] *Ibid*, p 71
[46] *Ibid*, pp 75-76

To forestall any impartial judgment Lady Shelley continues

> Of those remaining who were intimate with Shelley at this time, each has given us a different version of this sad event, coloured by his own views and personal feelings Evidently Shelley confided to none of these friends We, who bear his name, and are of his family, have in our possession papers written by his own hand, which few now living, except Shelley's own children, have now perused [47]

Then she goes on emphatically, as though intensity will make up for lack of proof

> One mistake which has gone forth to the world, we feel ourselves called upon positively to contradict.
>
> Harriet's death has sometimes been ascribed to Shelley This is entirely false There was no immediate connection whatever between her tragic end and any conduct on the part of her husband It is true, however, that it was a permanent source of the deepest sorrow to him, for never during all his after life did the dark shade depart which had fallen on his gentle and sensitive nature from the self-sought grave of the companion of his early youth [48]

On the next page she makes this statement: "It was in the society and sympathy of the Godwins that Shelley sought and found some relief in his present sorrow" For this Peacock took her to task, drily saying that no doubt the inexperience of authorship had made her write in such a way as to make the words "present sorrow" refer to the suicide, when the suicide really took place two years after Shelley's friendship with the Godwins By pulling the suicide of Harriet out of its chronological place between the second trip to Geneva and the second marriage, Lady Shelley without actually saying so made the elopement seem to take place after the suicide

The apologia for Shelley and Mary follows the reference to the "present sorrow"

> He [Shelley] was still extremely young His anguish, his isolation, his difference from other men, his gifts of genius and eloquent enthusiasm, made a deep impression on Godwin's daughter Mary, now a girl of sixteen, who had been accustomed to hear Shelley spoken of as something rare and strange To her, as they met one eventful day in St Pancras Churchyard, by her mother's grave, Bysshe, in burning words, poured forth the tale of his wild past – how he had suffered, how he had been misled, and how, if supported by her love, he hoped in future years to

[47] *Ibid*, p 76
[48] *Ibid*, p 76

> enroll his name with the wise and good who had done battle for their fellow-men, and be true through all adverse storms to the cause of humanity
>
> Unhesitatingly she placed her hand in his, and linked her fortune with his own, and most truthfully, as the remaining portions of these Memorials will prove, was the pledge of both redeemed
>
> The theories in which the daughter of the authors of *Political Justice* and of the *Rights of Woman* had been educated spared her from any conflict between her duty and her affection For she was the child of parents whose writings had for their object to prove that marriage was one among the many institutions which a new era in the history of mankind was about to sweep away By her father, whom she loved – by the writings of her mother, whom she had been taught to venerate – these doctrines had been rendered familiar to her mind It was, therefore, natural that she should listen to the dictates of her own heart, and willingly unite her fate with one who was so worthy of her love [49]

Without Mary, Lady Shelley thinks, Shelley would have been nothing at all

> Her influence over him was of an important kind His anxiety to aid the intelligence of the less instructed, and his efforts to promote the well-being of the poorer classes of his fellow-creatures, were as vivid and as strenuous as before, yet his mind, by gradually bending to milder influences divested itself of much of that hostile bitterness of thought and expression with which he had hitherto attacked those political and social abuses which had seemed to him to be the principal obstacles to the progressive development of mankind
>
> His pecuniary struggles, his father's persevering anger, and the calumnies of his unscrupulous enemies, had no longer the same power to embitter his existence and to rouse his darker passions From then he had a sure refuge Evil might be without, but by his hearth, were sympathy and encouragement and love [50]

In these remarkable passages Lady Shelley cleans up Shelley for the Victorian show window She reconciles his passionate abuse of institutions with ideas of decorum, and at the same time forestalls any comment about lack of sympathy in his own home If any Philistine should be unkind enough to point out the absence of a marriage license, how much more important

[49] *Ibid*, pp 77-78
[50] *Ibid*, pp 82-83

was the change in his character wrought by Mary than such a minor technicality as marriage lines To reinforce her Mariolatry, Lady Shelley prints extracts from "Mrs Shelley's Private Journal" which show Mary's extraordinary devotion to Shelley's memory All of the extracts were written after Shelley's death Among them is Mary's own defense of herself, presumably against those like Hogg, Jane Williams, and Trelawny, who had found her after Shelley's death a changed woman, disloyal to Shelley's principles of freedom from convention

Mary's declaration of independence from this set of loose livers, to whom, particularly Trelawny, she owed much, can be readily understood when we realize that in heart and soul she had revolted against the tenets of her early girlhood and the results of them strewn all round her

Claire in her memoir also scorned, like Trelawny, Mary's defection in vituperative words as bitter as his

> She has given up every hope of imaginary excellence, and has compromised all the nobler parts of her nature and has sneaked in upon any terms she could get into society although she full well knew she could meet nothing there but depravity Others still cling round the image and memory of Shelley – with her it ought to be the sole thought of her being, his ardent youth, his exalted being, his simplicity and enthusiasm are the sole thoughts of their being, but she has forsaken even their memory for the pitiful pleasure of trifling with trifles, and has exchanged the sole thought of his being for a share in the corruptions of society Would to God she could perish without note or remembrance, so the brightness of his name might not be darkened by the corruptions she sheds upon it What low ambition is that, that seeks for tinsel and gaudiness when the reality of all that is noble and worthy has passed away It will perhaps be objected to these The only other palliation I have to offer to these meannesses of conduct and heart, is the surpassing beauty of her mind, every sentiment of hers is so glowing and beautiful, it is worth the actions of another person
>
> She is a mixture of vanity and good nature Re-collecting her conduct at Pisa I can never help feeling horror even in only looking at her – the instant she appears I feel not as if I had blood in my veins but in its stead the sickening crawling motion of the Death Worm (Grylls, R Glynn, *Claire Clairmont,* 1939, pp 254-5)

Stung by these charges of disloyalty to Shelley's principles, Mary wrote in defense·

> If I had raved and ranted about what I did not understand, had I adopted a set of opinions, and propagated them with enthusiasm, had I been careless of attack and eager for notoriety,

then the party to which I belonged had gathered round me, and I had not been alone

It has been the fashion with these same friends to accuse me of worldliness There, indeed, in my own heart and conscience, I take a high ground I may distrust my own judgment too much – be too indolent and too timid, but in conduct I am above merited blame

I like society, I believe all persons who have any talent (who are in good health) do The soil that gives forth nothing may lie ever fallow, but that which produces – however humble its product – needs cultivation, change of harvest, refreshing dews and ripening sun Books do much, but the living intercourse is the vital heat Debarred from that, how have I pined and died! .

I sought at that time to make acquaintances – to divert my mind from this anguish I got entangled in various ways through my ready sympathy and too eager heart, but I never crouched to society – never sought it unworthily If I have never written to vindicate the Rights of Women, I have ever befriended women when oppressed At every risk, I have befriended and supported victims to the social system, but I make no boast, for in truth it is simple justice I perform, and so I am still reviled for being worldly [51]

This outburst of Mary's is, we should realize, a long pent-up protest against what she endured in her eight years of whirlwind existence with Shelley and his set, during six of which she was bearing and burying three children, suffering a serious miscarriage with a fourth, and giving birth to Sir Percy, the sole survivor of improper diet, unsanitary living, and topsy turvy housekeeping

Lady Shelley's policy on delicate questions was to ignore those which had not been brought to public attention and skim over lightly with an ambiguous collection of phrases those which had aroused or might arouse controversy Shelley's relationship with women other than his two wives is not brought to the foreground at all Claire Clairmont, Mary Shelley's stepsister, is not mentioned by name nor is her presence indicated at the time of the elopement and of her residence with the Shelleys at Marlow, at Bath, at Geneva, in Italy, save for the presence of the initial "C", which occurs in several letters Who "C" is is not made clear

In a letter Mary wrote to Shelley while he was looking for a house, she says. "Give me a garden, and *absentia Clara* and I will thank my love for many favours" This quotation is rendered by Lady Shelley "Give me a

[51] *Ibid*, pp 267-268

garden, and I will thank my love for many favours" The omission of "and *absentia Claria*" is not indicated by any marks

No connection between Claire and Allegra is apparent in the *Shelley Memorials* Allegra is suddenly produced at Marlow as if by spontaneous combustion Next, she is sent to her father, Lord Byron, and then she appears briefly in a quotation from *Julian and Maddalo* Shelley sees her in a vision shortly after her death, and she is mentioned once in the extracts given from Mary's journal

The roll call of Shelley's women friends is by no means complete Elizabeth Hitchener is not mentioned and neither are the Boinvilles Sophia Stacey appears briefly and anonymously in a letter written by Mary Shelley to Mrs Gisborne Jane Williams appears under the sanctity of her "married" name, and as a companion in sorrow to Mary Shelley Emilia Viviani, to whom *Epipsychidion* was addressed, is the only one honored with a biographical sketch In this, according to Lady Shelley, the only feeling she inspired in Shelley was pity, "who used frequently to visit her while she was living in the convent, and to do his utmost to ameliorate her wretched condition"[52] One should read *Talks with Lady Shelley* to get Lady Shelley's point of view on the subject of Mystical Love

For further window dressing, Lady Shelley included in her book Shelley's *Essay on Christianity,* a version not strictly accurate as Ingpen points out in the notes to his edition of the essay [53]

To placate the orthodox, she omitted the passage which challenges Christ's divinity and refers to Him as the Universal Pan who may be a god or man

> It is the profound wisdom and the comprehensive morality of his doctrine which essentially distinguished him from the crowd of martyrs and of patriots who have exulted to devote themselves for what they conceived would contribute to the benefit of their fellowmen [54]

Finally, Lady Shelley's *Shelley Memorials* contains only as much of Shelley's biography as the Shelley family was willing to have disclosed in 1859 In her preface she warned the reading public that the time had not come for the disclosing of anything further, that the family had papers which, if revealed, would clear Shelley and Mary of all blame No doubt she and Dr Garnett sank back from their labors hoping and believing that Shelley biography was now safely steered into its proper channels.

[52] *Ibid*, pp 163-164

[53] *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley,* newly edited by Roger Ingpen and Walter Peck The Julian Edition, London, Ernest Benn Limited, 1929, 10 vols Vol VI, p 364

[54] *Ibid*, Vol VI, p 227

Thomas Love Peacock's Controversy With Richard Garnett

Much to the consternation of Lady Shelley and Dr Garnett their *Shelley Memorials* proved to be oil poured upon the burning coals of Hogg's suppressed biography Peacock who, as we have seen, joined Mary in restraining Hunt from publishing his inaccurate memoir of Shelley, had also refused Lady Shelley's entreaties to cooperate with Hogg and Trelawny in a joint biographical endeavor His feelings for Harriet, however, could not endure the treatment given her by the authors of *Shelley Memorials* He particularly resented the family contentions that a prolonged estrangement from Harriet was the cause of the elopement and that the suicide of Harriet was not caused directly or indirectly by any action of Shelley's

Peacock's answer in defense of Harriet appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* for January 1, 1860 After denying, as Mary had denied to Hunt, that the separation between Harriet and Shelley took place by mutual consent – as Medwin, Hunt, Middleton, and Lady Shelley had all maintained – Peacock protested that "their sequence of words does not in these passages coincide with the sequence of facts There had been no estrangement to the end of 1812 My own memory sufficiently attests there was none in 1813"[55]

He was particularly incensed by the current reports of Harriet's infidelity

> There was no estrangement, no shadow of a thought of separation, till Shelley became acquainted, not long after his second marriage [to Harriet], with the lady who was subsequently his second wife
>
> The separation did not take place by mutual consent I cannot think that Shelley ever so represented it He never did so to me, and the account which Harriet herself gave me of the entire proceeding was decidedly contradictory of such supposition
> I feel it due to the memory of Harriet to state my most decided conviction that her conduct as a wife was as pure, as true, as absolutely faultless, as that of any who for such conduct are held most in honour [56]

He also published for the first time the document showing Shelley's remarriage with Harriet in March, 1814 An American critic, Richard Henry Stoddard, as we shall see, also took Lady Shelley to task for con-

[55] Peacock, Thomas Love, *The Works of Thomas Love Peacock*, London, Richard Bentley and Son, 1875 Vol III, pp 415-416
[56] *Ibid*, pp 417-419

cealing evidence so damaging to her statement that there was an estrangement in 1813 and 1814

Peacock's defense drew a reply from Richard Garnett in "Shelley in Pall-Mall,"

> The time cannot be distant when these assertions must be refuted by the publication of documents hitherto withheld, and Shelley's family have doubted whether it be worth while to anticipate it Pending their decision, I may be allowed to state most explicitly that the evidence to which they would in such a case appeal, and to the nature of which I feel fully competent to speak, most decidedly contradicts the allegations of Mr Peacock [57]

In an attempt to show that Shelley could not possibly have wanted Harriet if he had known her longer, Garnett said

> His knowledge of her when he wrote the second of the letters was most likely merely derived from the account of his sisters, her schoolfellows This accords with the assertion, made in an interesting but unpublished document in the writer's possession, that he first saw her in January, 1811 Whenever this and similar manuscripts are made public, it will for the first time be understood how slight was the acquaintance of Shelley with Harriet, previous to their marriage, what advantage was taken of his chivalry and sentiment, and her compliant disposition, and the inexperience of both, and how little entitled or disposed she felt herself to complain of his behaviour [58]

In polite but firm rebuttal, Peacock replied in *Fraser's* for March, 1862

> A few facts in the order of time will show, I will not say the extreme improbability, but the absolute impossibility, of Shelley's family being in possession of any such documents as are here alleged to exist [59]

– a declaration which shows that he was not, like Hunt, aware of Mary and Lady Shelley's purchase of the Major Byron forgeries and how their contents were being used Then he listed the first and second marriages, the visit to the Boinvilles in April, 1814, Hogg's recital of Shelley's meeting with Mary in the spring of 1814, Harriet's letter to Hookham written shortly before July 7, and the elopement on July 28 Between Harriet's letter and the elopement Peacock said there were twenty-one days in which the con-

[57] Garnett, Richard, "Shelley in Pall-Mall," in *Macmillan's Magazine*, London, Macmillan and Company, Vol II, May-October, 1860, p 100

[58] *Ibid*, p 107

[59] Peacock, *op cit*, p 444

sent by Harriet could have been given But more damaging than this list of events was his publication of Eliza Westbrook's affidavit which quoted Shelley's statement about Mary as the "Lady whose union with the said defendant this deponent might excusably regard as the cause of her Sister's ruin"

Had Leigh Hunt lived to come forward with a letter written to him by Mary Shelley on December 28, 1825, he could have given Peacock much support Mary herself had declared, as we have seen, in a letter to Hunt.

> Shelley and Harriet . did not part by mutual consent, and Shelley's justification to me rests on other grounds, so that you would be obliged to remodel a good part of your writing Peacock was urgent that such a mistake should not pass, and on account of the arrangements with Sir Timothy Shelley was unwilling that it should be printed Peacock is in possession of the manuscript [60]

Peacock's answer drew a further reply from Garnett in *Relics of Shelley,* published in 1862 After maintaining that Shelley took an interest in Harriet's welfare after the elopement until December, 1814, Garnett asserted that the most important of the documents concerning the separation have been found "in the space of time between Mr Hogg's biography and Mr. Peacock's first article" This would mean that between April and June, 1858 new documents had appeared, yet the forged letters had already been in Lady Shelley's possession for at least seven years Perhaps only then had she shown them to Garnett He asked

> How comes it that Mr Peacock, so lynx-eyed in eliciting from Mr Hogg's volumes every little circumstance which he imagines may possibly be construed to Shelley's disadvantage, should have overlooked the most important original document they contain, a document utterly at variance with his view of the subject [61]

This document is the letter Shelley sent to Hogg, March 16, 1814, in which he lamented his fate at having to leave the Boinvilles

> If it be difficult to suppose Mr Peacock unacquainted with the existence of this letter, it is impossible that he should have misconceived its purport, if he ever read it Yet I had much rather accept either of these alternatives, than the only one which remains – that he relied upon the ignorance of his readers Let that pass, and let us be content with hoping that he will not again accuse Mary of having caused an estrangement which the dates adduced by himself prove to have existed before Shelley had

[60] Wise *op cit*, p 6

[61] Garnett, Richard, *Relics of Shelley,* London, Edward Moxon and Company, 1862, p 151

> seen her, and will acknowledge that whether Miss Westbrook were or were not "excusable" in attributing the "ruin" of her sister to Shelley's acquaintance with his second wife, she could not be correct in so doing It is hardly necessary to add what has been so frequently stated, that no conduct of Shelley's had any connection, direct or indirect, with Harriet's death [62]

Garnett pointed out also that Peacock contradicted himself when he maintained on the one hand that there had been no estrangement and on the other that had Eliza not lived with them their marriage might have succeeded The second marriage, Garnett adds, was merely for the purpose of establishing and protecting the title Finally, he attacked Peacock personally by quoting Cornelia Turner's opinion of him as a "cold scholar" with neither "taste" nor "feeling"

On the basis of this opinion – and Peacock could not have viewed the romantic vaporings of the Boinville set with anything but ridicule – Garnett maintained Shelley would not have confided in Peacock, overlooking the fact apparently that Shelley had appointed Peacock as one of the executors of his will But Garnett was only echoing the family resentment at Peacock's constituting himself a champion of Harriet, though Garnett repeatedly asserted that the Shelley family had no desire to defame her In direct contradiction to this defense we have Dowden's letters to Garnett listing a series of charges against Harriet which Sir Percy and Lady Shelley were eager to have Dowden include,[63] and we find Garnett and Dowden together drawing further fine points over these questions in what Mrs Olwen Ward Campbell calls "that most unattractive volume," *Letters About Shelley,* that "throws some curious sidelights on methods of dealing with the relics of great men"

Dowden wrote to Garnett on May 17, 1885

> The difficulty I anticipated from the first arose from my perceiving that Lady Shelley (guided by the best of feelings) had filled up all the gaps with conjectures which time seemed to have altered into something like certainties – Harriet was weakly during pregnancy, Eliza pressed her to drink wine, etc, Shelley never loved Harriet etc ! And since this could not have been put forward for lack of evidence I feared that the treatment which would seem right to her must be to profess silence about things known but generously reserved [64]

Lady Shelley's vindictiveness against Peacock for his championship of Harriet reached its climax in after years when she accused him, on Hogg's

[62] *Ibid*, pp 154-155
[63] *Letters About Shelley, op cit*, p 116
[64] *Ibid*, pp 116-117

authority, of having been Harriet's lover This monstrous charge she inserted in her autograph on the fly leaves of all copies of *Shelley and Mary* as follows

> Shelley's separation from his first wife
>
> Although from the first much discomfort had at times arisen, yet it does not seem that any serious estrangement occurred till after the Shelleys' journey to Edinburgh in October, 1813 They were accompanied on that occasion by Mr Peacock, with whom until that time they were but slightly acquainted
>
> Peacock was just then in money difficulties and was glad to take advantage of the Shelleys' kindness, which he very ill requited We have every reason to associate Mr Peacock with the first serious estrangement [65]

In a footnote, Grylls adds

> Hogg was responsible for suggesting the accusation to the Shelleys In copies of Memoranda addressed to Garnett, Sir Percy says, "If what Hogg printed is to be believed and quoted, what he told Lady Shelley must also be quoted," "Peacock was Harriet's lover, this was positive information from Hogg to Lady S Therefore Peacock ought not to be credited or quoted "[66]

How valid such a statement is can be seen in the following quotation from a letter written by Garnett, Peacock's adversary, to Dowden, June 5, 1885

> Supposing for a moment that Peacock had made improper overtures to Harriet, and that these had been repelled, the incident need no more have disturbed their affection than the previous affair with Hogg But supposing that they were successful, Shelley either knew of them or he did not If he did not the circumstance could not occasion the separation If he knew of them at the time the separation would have occurred there and then If he had learned them afterwards he would not have admitted Peacock to his intimacy and that of his second wife. Mrs Shelley's statement to Lady Shelley that Hogg alone knew the reason of the separation is a proof that, at least in Mrs Shelley's opinion, Peacock did not know it, and that it could not therefore have been occasioned by misconduct on his part [67]

Not even what Jeaffreson called Lady Shelley's "Privy Council" could permit such a slander to stand and under Garnett's insistence Sir Percy and Lady Shelley finally acquiesced with his views On June 29, 1885 he wrote

[65] Grylls, *op cit*, p 269 The Yale copy does not contain it
[66] *Ibid*, p 269
[67] *Letters About Shelley, op cit*, pp. 124-125.

> I do not think, for reasons which I have already stated to Sir Percy and Lady Shelley, that anything can be publicly said about the journey to Edinburgh as a cause of separation or anything in the conduct of Peacock The ground is much too insecure we must put forward nothing that cannot be proved [68]

Lady Shelley, however, did not acquiesce permanently; she persisted in perpetuating this slander by writing it and other admonishments on the fly leaves of her privately printed *Shelley and Mary* It is sufficient to say that no Shelley biographer has ever accepted it

Dr Garnett's final words, written in his essay on Peacock as late as 1901, retract as unjust and uncharitable his attack on Peacock's motives in the controversy He still maintains, however, that Peacock totally misstated the matter of Shelley's separation from Harriet and offers this final bit of casuistry.

> It is exceedingly simple If Shelley forsook Harriet for Mary merely because he liked Mary better, he cannot be justified by any code of morality If, after an insalvable breach with Harriet he transferred his affections elsewhere, his conduct right or wrong, would have had the approbation of Milton It is certain that such a breach had occurred before Shelley had seen Mary, and it is equally certain, without any groundless aspersion of Harriet's conjugal fidelity that the fault was not Shelley's [69]

This question will doubtless remain a matter of great debate, but it is plain that Dr Garnett, who never saw or knew Shelley, could not in the light of the misinformation, the false charges, and the forged letters supplied him by Lady Shelley form as correct an opinion of the separation as Peacock who lived through the whole experience from day to hectic day while Shelley, Harriet, and Mary were going through it In the light of the evidence we have presented, therefore, it seems clear that it was not Peacock but Garnett who persistently and "totally misstated the matter of Shelley's separation from Harriet"

Lady Shelley and Trelawny

As we have already observed, the rupture between Mary and Trelawny after 1837 was never healed He never forgave her for what seemed to him disloyalty to Shelley's ideals, for retreating to the morals and conventions of ordered society In his second book of memories, the *Records,* which appeared in 1878, he, therefore, was harsher in his estimate of Mary than

[68] *Ibid*, p 133
[69] Garnett, Richard, *Essays of an Ex Librarian,* 1901, p 254

in his first book of *Recollections,* and his forthright views of her are boldly set forth in his letters to Claire

Lady Shelley, however, had hoped to contrive a reunion of the three old friends of Shelley at Boscombe Manor in 1857 with the intent of engaging them in a cooperative biographical endeavor, doubtless too in the hope that she could preside over the trio and prevail upon them to write nothing that would destroy The Shelley Legend We have noticed how Peacock refused to have anything to do with such a proposal, we have seen what treatment was served to Hogg when the family papers were snatched from his hands Trelawny replied to Lady Shelley's invitation in February of 1857

> To assemble together under your roof three of the Poets old friends, to tell their storeys is a pleasant dream It is something similar to the plot of Bocacio's Decameron, but the Italian takes care to have youth and summer wr [weather]
>
> I told Percy when he was here that I was too old and selfish to leave my den In my youth I railed at age as hard and crabbed and so I find it
>
> I dont believe that either of the men you have mentioned will do what you wish Indolence and excessive sensitiveness to public opinion will prevent it – as it has already done [70]

Thus faded Lady Shelley's roseate dream of a harmony of the gospels Because of her falsified picture in *Shelley Memorials,* her treatment of Hogg, her differences with Peacock, and her interference and quarrels with Shelley's remaining friends, she succeeded in alienating all but the faithful few, and even they felt the task of meeting her whims, vagaries, and insistencies exceedingly trying

As the years went on and Trelawny read the effusions and apologetics of Dr Garnett, he waxed more and more wroth in his letters to Claire, more and more scornful and abusive of Mary, and ever more distrustful of Lady Shelley

> As to Mary Shelley, you are welcome to her she was nothing but the weakest of her sex – she was the Poet's wife and as bad a one as he could have found – her aim and object was fashionable society, she was conventional in everything and tormented him by jealousy and would have made him like Tom Moore if she could – she had not capacity to comprehend him or his poetry Shakespeare had a wife, so had Milton, who cares to know anything about them? – we know only they tormented their husbands I am solely interested about Shelley, and you are of the few left that knew and could appreciate him, in age we remember things past – better than those recent, I do – and we are

[70] Grylls, R Glynn *Mary Shelley, A Biography* London, Oxford University Press, 1938 Pages 284-285

> passing away – "Time has, my Lord, a wallet on his back in which he puts alms for oblivion" – Medwin died at [t]he end of last year at the age of 83 – five years older than Shelley I saw him before his death Godwin was a grossly selfish man – he is utterly forgotten and his books – so is Peacock – all Shelley's friends preyed upon him shamefully except Hogg – his love was pure – and the one bit of romance in his life Hogg was a soured and grossly ill-used able man, his life of Shelley's early years is most interesting and most ably written The memorials of Shelley Lady Shelley has put her name to – but it was done by a Mr Garnett of the British Museum – she has a craving after notoriety but all that know abhor her [71]

Forman's note on the last sentence of this letter is interesting

> This is obviously one of Trelawny's hasty generalities I for one knew and did not abhor the lady in question She was very troublesome in matters affecting Shelley, but her point of view was naturally not mine or Trelawny's

But on November 15, 1875, Trelawny returned to the attack

> Lady Shelley is anxious to assert that she [Harriet] was a prostitute to a stable-man – Shelley would not have permitted this wicked lie nor would I – but we shall pass away – and then there is none to stop her [72]

When Godwin's *Life* by Kegan Paul appeared, Trelawny observed (March 9, 1876) that it was "for the most part well done – but Lady Shelley's pernicious influence runs through it" Similarly, when George Barnett Smith's account appeared, he remarked, "I can see he has written it under the dictation of Lady Shelley and always wrong"

Again, on May 6, 1878, he wrote to Rossetti

> The writers who knew nothing of Shelley, under the dictation of the present Lady Shelley, are endeavouring to show that the Poet's Wife was endowed with every talent and every virtue Had it been so, my statement of the utter desolation and isolation in which he lived would be exaggeration, as I describe him forlorn and dejected with no one to sympathize or soothe him He received no solace or sympathy from his Early Friends, who disapproved of everything he wrote, His Wife was of their opinion and not of his, the dissimilarity of their views on every subject was a bar to his uttering his thoughts to her The cause of so many unhappy marriages is that in youth, they think, however

[71] *Trelawny, Edward John, Letters of* Edited by H Buxton Forman London, Oxford University Press, 1910 Pages 232-233

[72] *Ibid*, page 251

> dissimilar, when they are united their minds will assimilate For a given object we can take any shape for a time, but in every emergency the natural character appears, we cannot alter anyone, not even ourselves
>
> I write this in consequence of seeing the Review in the Examiner It was impossible for me to describe the Poet as he was, without describing his Wife as she was I had no enmity against Mrs Shelley, we were friends all her life [73]

Finally, Lady Shelley, stung to retort by Trelawny's crotchets, wrote him a long letter of reproof in August of 1878, which Miss Grylls has retrieved for us from the Boscombe Manor archives, but which, unfortunately, she quotes with omissions [74] After calling attention to the shrine where Trelawny's hair was contained in a glass case with locks of Leigh Hunt, Byron, and Williams, and where Trelawny's picture is to be found, Lady Shelley remarks that they were given at a time when Mary possessed in the giver a true and generous friend.

> But the Trelawny of those days, where is he? Alas! that the snows of age should not only have fallen on his head but should have frozen the heart that beat so warmly in 1822—

3 LADY SHELLEY AND LATER BIOGRAPHERS

Richard Henry Stoddard

In 1876 the American critic, Richard Henry Stoddard, compiled a useful *Anecdote Biography of Percy Bysshe Shelley* by combining MacCarthy, Hogg, Peacock, and Trelawny He had to confess, however, that every biography he had read appeared to have been written under a bias, and that of Lady Shelley's under the strongest of all! Stoddard evidently thought that by printing again the biographies of men who knew Shelley, he might correct the falsifications of the poet's life he had discovered in the work emanating from Lady Shelley, in his preface he launched the following protest against the methods of Lady Shelley and Dr Garnett

> Her "Shelley Memorials", which was originally published in 1859, omitted an important fact in the life of Shelley, – a fact which was brought to light by one of his early friends within a few months after the publication of her volume, – a fact which cannot have escaped her notice, but which she has kept her readers ignorant of for more than sixteen years This fact, which was disinterred from a Church Register by Mr. Thomas

[73] *Ibid*, pages 259-260
[74] Grylls, *op cit*, pages 285-287

> Love Peacock, is Shelley's second marriage to his first wife about four months before his elopement with Mary Godwin Lady Shelley suppressed this damaging fact, and by so doing laid herself open to – is it too much to say – the charge of literary dishonesty? It has been known to the world since January, 1860, when it was published by Mr Peacock in *Fraser's Magazine*, but it is not known today to the little world of Lady Shelley's readers Mr Richard Garnett, who published in 1862 a little book entitled "Shelley Relics", and who writes with the Shelley bias, calls it a formal re-marriage, and says practically that it is devoid of importance I cannot agree with him It was certainly of importance to Harriet Shelley, who was obliged to return to her father's roof, where she soon became a mother for the second time Mr Garnett refers to certain mysterious documents in the possession of Shelley's family, and Lady Shelley, in the Preface to the third edition of her volume, published in 1875, harps on the same string The time has not yet arrived, she thinks, when facts should be disclosed, she feels confident that the more there is really known, the more all mists of false aspersion and misconception will clear away from Shelley's memory, that the wishes of the dead are obeyed in keeping silence on all beyond what she has told, and so on This is womanly writing, but it is not biographical writing Lady Shelley's first great mistake, according to her point of view, was in placing Shelley documents in the hands of Mr Thomas Jefferson Hogg, whose "Life" of Shelley was published a year before her "Memorials" It was a mistake, but no reader of Shelley can wish that it had not been committed We know him through Hogg's curious volumes, as we could not have known him in any other biography, and as Lady Shelley would not have us know him at all [1]

Stoddard's is one of the early protests and reproofs on record from an outsider against the sort of thing that under Lady Shelley's influence was appearing from the pen of George Barnett Smith in the *Cornhill Magazine*

As an American, less dependent than others upon Lady Shelley's good graces, Stoddard was able to print this forthright rebuke that was to reverberate through Shelley criticism when Jeaffreson in 1883 took up the same cause but with a greater personal prejudice

For the beginner, perhaps the best brief one volume account of Shelley that can be had is, even today, Stoddard's *Anecdote Biography of Shelley* Here the student will find Shelley as his friends knew him, and not as the hallowed Saint of Lady Shelley's shrine.

[1] Stoddard, Richard Henry *Anecdote Biography of Percy Bysshe Shelley* New York, Scribner, Armstrong, 1877 Pages xv-xvii

George Barnett Smith

Eleven years before Dowden's official biography Lady Shelley had succeeded in spreading her complete version of the Harriet-Shelley-Mary story through the compliant pen of that fervent apologist, George Barnett Smith In the *Cornhill Magazine* (volume xxxi, 1875, pages 198-199) she repeated through him the assurance which she was never tired of giving out, that the family had documents which in due time would prove Shelley guiltless of all responsibility for the separation from Harriet and for her suicide

Smith in the following long passage from the magazine (very much curtailed when it appeared in book form in 1877) reveals in full the Lady Shelley formula He implies that he made "a close examination of authoritative documents" It seems scarcely likely that Lady Shelley showed him manuscript materials which she would not permit Dowden, the official biographer, to see during the period of his vain three-year insistence, but if Smith was so privileged, all Lady Shelley had to do was to show him the Major Byron forgeries – the letters of December 16 and of January 11 – and he would not have known that these were not in Shelley's hand

> With respect to Shelley's first marriage, I am able to state that documents exist (which will be published at a future date) fully demonstrating that the idea adopted by many too readily and persistently, that Shelley was largely responsible for the death of his wife, is totally erroneous The memories of some men are not cleared for years from the aspersions freely cast upon them, and the generous-hearted poet himself would in this case be the first to applaud the reasons which do not for the present permit the full weight of obloquy to be lifted from his name
> It has been manifested to a certainty that before Shelley parted from his first wife he had been convinced of their mutual incompatibility, and that they had lived unhappily for a considerable period preceding the actual separation Some have nevertheless asserted that there was no estrangement, and no shadow of a thought of separation till Shelley became acquainted with Mary Godwin Happily for Shelley, this charge is easily disposed of The poet never saw Mary Godwin till some date between April and June, 1814,[2] whilst Shelley's own statements, and the letters of his friends, prove that there was an estrangement between him and his wife long before that period The whole subject matter of contention as regards this marriage resolves itself, after close examination of authoritative documents, into these simple statements – the separation was not abruptly forced on

[2] Smith changed this error to "The first occasion on which Shelley saw Mary Godwin was in London, in the year 1812" Page 39

> Mrs Shelley, it did not take place because of any third person, the wife, equally with the husband, discovered that they were ill-suited to each other, and that it would have been better had they never met, and lastly, whatever may have been the precipitating causes, the separation was the result of a mutual understanding The world knows the disastrous end of Mrs Shelley, but from all blame in the tragedy the poet is completely free Controversy on the subject is unnecessary, as evidence of an irrefragable character exists to prove the truth of the statement But Shelley, as might be readily imagined, was deeply affected by the event Leigh Hunt declares that it completely unmanned him for a period, and that he suffered remorse at having brought his wife into a sphere which she was not qualified to fill One writer says – "I am well aware that he had suffered severely, and that he continued to be haunted by certain recollections, partly real and partly imaginative, which pursued him like an Orestes" Captain Medwin affirmed that the sad circumstance ever after threw a cloud over the poet, and all biographers speak of the genuineness and strength of his sorrow Documents, however, yet to be published clearly show that in Shelley's feelings there was no mingling of self-reproach, for his conscience was clear

If we examine this formula we can see that it is a compound of the following familiar ingredients

(1) the promise of documents to be revealed later which would exonerate Shelley
(2) the mutual incompatibility of Harriet and Shelley (Medwin) based on what Mary and Hunt told him
(3) their long estrangement (Mary, Hunt)
(4) their separation by mutual understanding (Hunt's lie which Mary denied)
(5) Shelley's profound remorse witnessed by Hunt and Peacock, incompatible with Shelley's lack of self-reproach and clear conscience (letter of December 15-16, 1816)

Since Lady Shelley knew perfectly well that in exposing these forged letters she was running a risk of detection, she utilized with great skill a prime reason for not showing them to scholars or making them public namely the same argument Mary had used against Medwin, that Ianthe, Shelley's daughter by Harriet, was still living and would be injured But when she continued year after year to assure biographers, like Rossetti, Symonds, Sharp, and Rabbe, certain critics began to get restless When James Thomson reviewed Symonds' biography in the English Men of Letters series in 1878, two years after Ianthe had died, he made a significant addition to Symonds' passages on Harriet These two crucial passages in Symonds re-

veal also that Symonds himself was by no means convinced, but was keeping his fingers crossed until the proof was forthcoming

> "It must be added that the Shelley family, in their memorials of the poet and through their friend, Mr Richard Garnett, inform us, without casting any slur on Harriet, that documents are extant which will completely vindicate the poet's conduct in this matter It is, therefore, but just to await their publication before pronouncing a decided judgment" (Symonds, 1878, page 81) To which we [Thomson] may add that we are at a loss to divine why their publication is delayed so long after the death of Harriet's daughter [3]

Symonds' further elaboration of this point is pertinent

> So far as this is possible, I have attempted to narrate the most painful episode in Shelley's life as it occurred, without extenuation and without condemnation Until the papers, mentioned with such insistence by Lady Shelley and Mr Garnett, are given to the world, it is impossible that the poet should not bear the reproach of heartlessness and inconstancy in this the gravest of all human relations Such, however, is my belief in the essential goodness of his character, after allowing, as we must do, for the operation of his peculiar principles upon his conduct, that I for my own part am willing to suspend my judgment till the time arrives for his vindication The language used by Lady Shelley and Mr Garnett justify us in expecting that that vindication will be as startling as complete If it is not, they, as pleading for him, will have overshot the mark of prudence [4]

It was not, then, that every one readily accepted the views promulgated by Lady Shelley But Smith went on to minimize the charge of atheism laid to Shelley, to counteract the scorn of Carlyle at Shelley's "filling the earth with inarticulate wail, like the infinite, inarticulate grief and weeping of forsaken infants", and to deny that *Queen Mab* contained Shelley's real views on politics, religion, and society, "in view of the overwhelming existing evidence to the contrary" (which, we may add, he does not produce)

He then took the "fine and genial James Russell Lowell" to task for adopting as genuine some of the charges "from which it was to be hoped Shelley had been cleared", and "for taking too gross a view of the relations between Shelley and Mary Godwin" because of "defective information".

It was Lowell who had said of Harriet that

[3] Thomson, James *Biographical and Critical Studies* London, Reeves and Turner, 1896. Pages 295-296

[4] Symonds, J A. *Shelley* (English Men of Letters) London, Macmillan, 1878 Page 83

> . no theorizing can sweeten desertion, and the unhappy woman, disenchanted of the dream, and forsaken by the substance sought shelter in death . The lovers of Shelley as a man and a poet have done what they could to palliate his conduct in this matter But a question of morals, as between man and society, cannot be reduced to any individual standard however exalted Our partiality for the man only heightens our detestation of the error The greater Shelley's genius, the nobler his character and impulses, so much the more startling is the warning If we make our own inclinations the measure of what is right, we must be the sterner in curbing them A woman's heart is too delicate a thing to serve as a fulcrum for the lever with which a man would overturn any system, however conventional The misery of the elective-affinity scheme is that men are not chemical substances, and that in nine cases out of ten the force of the attraction works more constantly and lastingly upon the woman than the man There is no stronger argument against it than the Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft The Mormon polygamy is nothing more than a plant from the same evil seed sown in a baser soil, and is an attempt to compromise between the higher instincts of mankind, organized in their institutions, and the bestial propensities of sensualized individuals [5]

Lowell had much of Carlyle's and Arnold's attitude toward Shelley's poetry in fact, Arnold's famous word, "ineffectual", seems to echo Lowell Lowell wrote " . . his genius [Lessing's] was not a St Elmo's fire, as it was in Shelley's case for example, playing in ineffectual flame about the points of his thoughts", and "He has a fatal copiousness which is his vice "[6]
Carlyle, in addition to the sentence previously given, wrote to Browning on March 8, 1853

> In fact I am not sure but you would excommunicate me, – at least lay me under the "lesser sentence," for a time, – if I told you all I thought of Shelley! Poor soul, he has always seemed to me an extremely weak creature, and lamentable much more than admirable Weak in genius, weak in character (for these two always go together), a poor, thin, spasmodic, hectic, shrill and pallid being, – one of those unfortunates, of whom I often speak, to whom "the talent of *silence*," first of all, has been denied The speech of such is never good for much Poor Shelley, there is something void, and Hades-like in the whole inner world of him, his universe is all vacant azure, hung with a few frosty mournful if beautiful stars, the very voice of him

[5] Lowell, James Russell "Memoir" in the 1857 Riverside Edition of Shelley It is attributed to C E Norton, in the 1865 edition
[6] Lowell, James Russell "Lessing," in *Among My Books,* First and Second Series Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co, 1904 Volume II, pages 166-167

> (his style, &c), shrill, shrieky, to my ear has too much of the *ghost!*"[7]

Smith then continued with some backing and filling on the elopement, admitting Shelley "was to blame in setting at naught the customs of society" But he included for palliation Lady Shelley's classic statement from the *Memorials,* couched in Dr Garnett's most unctuous style.

William M. Rossetti

When J Bertrand Payne, a partner in the firm of Moxon, invited William Rossetti in 1868 to contribute a Shelley memoir and edition to a series of English poets, Rossetti in elation wrote to his friend, William Allingham

> Is it not a glorious chance, this *Shelley* editing and biographizing? Willingly would I not only be doing it for pay, but do it for nothing, or pay to do it [8]

It was, perhaps, just as well for Rossetti financially that Payne did not see this letter or perceive Rossetti's enthusiasm

At first thought, Rossetti believed that the best biography of Shelley would be an autobiography composed of about forty selected letters, and with some labor he completed this manuscript of letters with "the slightest possible connecting thread of matters of fact". He found, however, an insuperable obstacle he had not anticipated The Shelley family held "copyright, etc , and my compilation remains unpublished," says Rossetti [9]

Of all critics, William M Rossetti was best fitted by temperament, knowledge, and critical acumen to write the ideal life of Shelley First, he believed with the Shelley enthusiasts that Shelley was the greatest English poet since Milton or possibly since Shakespeare Second, he had the Continental point of view rather than the Puritanical (Lowell) or the Victorian (Browning, Arnold, Kingsley) prepossessions regarding Shelley's conduct He was not perturbed or filled with disgust like Arnold over Shelley's irregularities and pagan moralities That he should view Harriet with the understanding his brother had lavished on "Jenny" was inevitable From lifelong experience with the set of poets and artists that clustered about his completely Bohemian brother, Dante Gabriel, he could look with the bland

[7] Carlyle, Thomas Quoted in *Letters of Robert Browning Collected by Thomas J Wise* Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Thurman L Hood New Haven, Yale University Press, 1933 Pages 367-368

[8] *Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti to William Allingham, 1854-1870,* by George Birkbeck Hill New York, Stokes (preface 1897) Page 288

[9] *Rossetti Papers, 1862-1870,* a compilation by William Michael Rossetti London, Sands, 1903 Page 397 See also Wise, *A Shelley Library,* page 133

and all-seeing eye of Jove upon the temperamental vagaries of Shelley, and with sympathy and amusement could survey the breathless and harebrained thirty years of that combination of fierce comet and whirling dervish He had lived through the escapades, in his own circle, of young Swinburne – and of his disreputable associates, Simeon Solomon, Charles Howell, etc Happily married to Lucy Madox, a Pre-Raphaelite beauty, he acted as editor, advisor, helper, and friend to everybody, and with no reproach for anyone or from anyone served as balance-wheel for the gifted set that gathered around his distinguished family Third, he could respond sympathetically to the ecstacies of Shelley's poetic flights, even if they ended "Pinnacled dim in the intense inane", fourth, he was scrupulously open-minded, industrious, and honest in his search for and weighing of biographical evidences He discovered Shelley's fervid letters to Elizabeth Hitchener As Hogg and Peacock were dead, he cultivated Trelawny and even made a trip to Italy to visit Claire Clairmont with a letter of introduction from Trelawny, fifth he was so kind and magnanimous in spirit that he could get along with all schools of Shelley interpretation he even paid just tribute to the value of Jeaffreson's *The Real Shelley,* sixth, he was a political liberal, far more to the socialist Left than Leslie Stephen, Symonds, or Arnold, who regarded Shelley's social doctrines as "pernicious nonsense" He was equally the warm friend of Richard Garnett, the faithful mentor, guardian, and mouthpiece of Lady Shelley, and of Browning, who would not join Furnivall's Shelley Society because of the way Shelley had treated Harriet, and of Trelawny, Lady Shelley's bitter antagonist

In many respects, Rossetti's judicious article in the Ninth Edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1870) was for that date an admirable short treatment, his revised *Memoir* of 1878 is indispensable, as is his final revision of it for the Shelley Society in 1886 Unfortunate, however, was his deference to the false evidences and the assurances of Lady Shelley, which came to him through his repeated consultations with Garnett, who read his MS and made final suggestions and revisions, but then he was helpless in their hands and without access to their purported originals

The history and the progress of his whole endeavor are intimately revealed day by day in two equally important books his diary, *Rossetti Papers, 1826 to 1870,* and *Letters About Shelley,* edited by R S Garnett, (pages 13-64) which contain the correspondence between him and Garnett on the subject. His *Some Reminiscences* also has valuable data

At no time, however, did he have an opportunity nor did he deem it wise to consult Lady Shelley directly, or to visit Boscombe Manor socially or for scholarly purposes, as did Allingham, Garnett – and later Dowden He had to rely upon the assurances that Garnett gave him

He started out bravely with a determination to maintain his independence, even to the point when remonstrance came in that he might injure

the living He said he believed it was the duty of a biographer to give the true portrait of the poet even at the cost of the feelings of living relatives or friends In this respect he differed from Peacock, who believed in reticencies out of regard for the living, and from Browning, who had a strong feeling that a poet's life was his own business and not that of the public, as he illustrated in his poem House" We also recall how Browning hurried upstairs and burned his own correspondence after he had read Froude's *Carlyle,* and how he exploded when he came upon FitzGerald's remark about Mrs Browning in FitzGerald's letters

Payne, however, had already sent Rossetti on his way with a tissue of glaring inaccuracies which reveal what the Harriet story had grown to in twenty years of gossip since it first appeared

> Called on J B Payne with regard to the Shelley project He says that Hogg left the *Life of Shelley* finished, but that the family is averse from its appearing, that Garnett had an idea of writing a Life, and had collected some materials, but that this also is in abeyance, and may probably not be done, and that the objection of Sir P[ercy] Shelley to full details concerning the death of the first Mrs S[helley], followed by the second marriage of S[helley], is understood to arise from the fact that Sir P[ercy] was born only about a month after the second marriage, and some pains had to be taken to prove his legitimacy The first Wife, Payne says, became strictly a prostitute – Shelley not having made any arrangements for her support, and being, after he had left England, more or less in the dark as to her position [10]

George Henry Lewes, Rossetti goes on to say, had the intention of writing a memoir, but his project was set aside by the Shelley family Rossetti asked him what he knew

> about Harriet and the life she led, he having in the old time had the intention, which it appears was set aside by the Shelley family, of writing memoirs He says she first was taken up by a man, and, when abandoned by him, she took to any one One would say it is just the same in effect as being on the street, as far as he learned from Leigh Hunt and others, but that she was not in a brothel, I suppose He exonerates Shelley, but that can only be done by supposing him weak and little perceptive To suppose him so egotistical that he did not think of her at all is not to exonerate him [11]

Here is the Harriet scandal story again as Hunt had it from Mary and spread it to Medwin and to Brown, as we have seen, though Hunt kept all

[10] *Rossetti Papers,* page 332
[11] *Ibid*, page 373

mention of it out of his own writings, and told it to others, like Lewes, only in private conversation

Swinburne, whose praise of Shelley as a divine lyric poet could not be more glowing, encouraged Rossetti in his endeavors by urging him in a letter of May 22 (1869)

> I know you will agree with me that the one thing *now* to be done is to unearth and expose every possible detail of the business for Shelley's own sake and ours Do root things up—for I am sure the closer we get to facts the greater and purer he will come out [12]

Swinburne also sent him on June 24 (1869) Browning's confidential version of the Harriet story, which Browning had heard from Hookham and had had confirmed by the letters of Harriet shown him by Hookham Browning gave it to Swinburne *confidentially* because, however much he loathed the attempts to make Shelley a good and holy man after the model of Lady Shelley and Garnett, he believed in gentlemanly reticencies and in deferring to the feelings of the Shelley heirs But even in his famous irrelevant introduction to the forged letters of 1852 he had put in a guarded but plain caveat

> There existed from the beginning,—simultaneous with, indeed anterior to his earliest noticeable works, and not brought forward to counteract any impression they had succeeded in making,—certain charges against his private character and life, which, if substantiated to their whole breadth, would materially disturb, I do not attempt to deny, our reception and enjoyment of his works, however wonderful the artistic qualities of these [13]

This is a forerunner of Matthew Arnold's pain on reading Dowden

The facts which Swinburne now gave to Rossetti from Browning seriatim are

> 1) That Shelley *did* desert Harriet and their child, and the child with which she was then pregnant, without fair warning or fair provision, "left them 14 shillings altogether," B says He has seen Harriet's letter to Shelley on his sudden disappearance, which by his account must be most piteous and touching
>
> 2) That Shelley during that period of his life was not responsible for his actions, was in fact positively insane, through excess of laudanum, taken to allay the pains of his illness
>
> 3) That Lord Eldon distinctly said at the trial that Shelley's atheism had nothing to do with his decision, "*he* had left the

[12] *Letters of Robert Browning Collected by Thomas J Wise* Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Thurman L Hood New Haven, Yale University Press, 1933 Page 371

[13] *Browning's Essay on Shelley* edited, with an Introduction, by Richard Garnett London, Moring, 1903 Page 53

children to starve, and the grandfather had taken them up, and had a right to keep them"

Now of course Browning loves Shelley even as much as you and I do (he said so in concluding) but these, he is certain, are the facts of the case I asked him to communicate them to you directly, but in case he does not I write this I have also written to Kirkup, who *may* remember (*not* spiritually) what was Landor's ultimate view of the matter, which I am very desirous to be assured of [14]

Swinburne's second letter, however, arrived the day before Rossetti had finished his biography, which he had begun on May 13 and ended Friday, June 25, 1869, and he had already succumbed to the persuasions of Garnett, so much so that in after years when he prepared his diary for print and came to Swinburne's letter (entry for June 29) he omitted the listing of items concerning Harriet which Swinburne had given him and printed only this note "Wrote Garnett, sending him Swinburne's letter conveying what Browning says about Harriet [Shelley] . . " On July 2, he records that he "Lent my Shelley Memoir to Garnett for inspection "

Garnett lost no time in rushing to the rescue, for next evening he came down to meet Trelawny at Rossetti's Here is the description of that most interesting meeting on Saturday, July 3

Trelawny came in, and spent the whole evening talking with me I introduced Garnett (then dining with me) to him, also Gabriel, who looked in late I was rather nervous as to the reception which Trel[awny], who is hostile to Lady Shelley and all her surroundings, might accord to Garnett, but luckily he received him well, and, after his departure, expressed a good impression of him Trel[awny] had not an unpleasant impression of Shelley's voice, save when he was excited, and then it turned shrieky as on one occasion when Shelley came in much perturbed from an interview with Byron, and screeched "By God! he's no better than a Christian" Trel[awny] saw something of Japan in his youth, and was much taken with my series of Japanese prints round the dining-room He must be 75 (or I think 76) years of age, but thinks nothing of sitting up till midnight, and walking home, perhaps 4¼ miles, from my neighborhood When he left me, about 11, he was going round to Digby Wyatt's in Travistock Place I returned him the Shelley MS and *Swellfoot* He says he will write down all residual reminiscences of Shelley, Byron, etc, to be published after his death Garnett says Trel[awny] is mistaken in supposing Touchett the principal writer of the *Shelley Memorials* it was not Touchett, nor yet Lady Shelley *Sunday 4 July*—Browning called to talk over the

[14] *Letters of Robert Browning, op cit*, page 371

Harriet Shelley affair Swinburne had mistaken him in supposing that he had seen the documents named in Forster's *Life of Landor* He is not now on comfortable terms with F[orster], and has seen nothing of those documents What he has seen is a set of letters from Harriet, then in the hands of Hookham the publisher, and some or all addressed to him these were placed in Browning's hands at the time he was editing the forged letters He quite confirms the drift of the correspondence as stated by Swinburne, authorizes me to use the information, but would not wish his name mentioned I modified this section of my Memoir accordingly Browning talked about an article in the *Temple Bar,* saying that he, as shown in the *Ring and the Book,* is an analyst, not creator, of character This, B[rowning] very truly says, is not applicable, because he has had to create, out of the mass of almost equally balanced evidence, the characters of the book as he conceives them, and it is only after that process that the analysing method can come into play I see he dislikes Trelawny quite as much as T[relawny] dislikes him (which is not a little) He told me a story of T[relawny]'s having eloped with a . lady, and, on being pursued by the Father, having told him that he had no objection to marrying her, but he had already five or six wives in various parts of the world B[rowning] knows all about Byron's divorce, partly from Mrs Jameson, who was intimate with Lady Byron He says the circumstances are very disgraceful to Byron, but (though he did not specify the particulars) it is quite clear the principal cause of the separation, as understood by Br[owning], is not that which S mentioned to me long ago as almost for certain known . . Basil Montagu is the lawyer whom, as Br[owning] tells me, Shelley consulted with a view to getting Harriet to live with Mary and himself I have named the fact in my Memoir, but not the personage

Monday, 5 July — Left *Shelley* at Moxon's [15]

As Œdipus exclaimed "All comes clear at last" There is little room for further doubt that we have here the true story of Harriet, from her correspondence with Hookham, which Browning read and hinted at in 1852, and Lowell repeated in essence in 1857, and which Peacock, with first-hand knowledge but similar Browning reticencies, had put forth in *Fraser's Magazine* (1858-1869) in protest against the *Shelley Memorials,* the same story which Sir Percy and Lady Shelley stopped by seizing Hogg's Mss and proscribing publication of his third and fourth volumes Obviously, the Shelley family would not have made such frantic and continuous efforts through the years to destroy and suppress this testimony had it not been so irre-

[15] *Rossetti Papers,* pages 400-401

trievably damaging to the poet This too was the story that Leigh Hunt knew but would not print

Be it noted that in this testimony there is not a word or a hint of the prostitute (Groom Smith) charge, or of the Godwins' charge of infidelity, either before or after Shelley's elopement with Mary, and no evidence whatever that the child Harriet was alleged to be carrying at her death was not Percy Bysshe Shelley's.

Browning reiterates the all-importance of the Hookham correspondence in his letter to Furnivall of September 29, 1883

> I wonder if he [Dowden] has had access to the correspondence of the first Mrs Shelley with—what was the bookseller's name, he of Bond Street, Shelley's intimate friend He put them into my hands, and a very decided impression they left with me, the reverse of what I had been prepared for by the biographers of Shelley Hookham (where was my memory?) offered them to me unreservedly on the only occasion of our interview, and they are all-important for a right view of the case as between wife and husband, the latter being, I hold, at that time of his life half crazy and wholly inexcusable [16]

also to Dowden, as "good evidence", and says Dowden should find it

> But the letters which he showed me were good evidence on certain points—misunderstood or misstated in every account I had previously seen [17]

Peacock in a letter to Claire, and De Ricci quoting Ingpen (page 140), note that Hookham disposed of his Shelley letters and rare pamphlets to Sir Percy and Lady Shelley and helped them form their collection of Shelley letters. Hookham died in 1867 The only Shelley to Hookham letters extant are before October 6, 1813, except the forged one in the 1852 volume None of the letters which Browning saw relating to Harriet were ever shown to Dowden, because three years after Hookham died, Allingham, who was intimate with Sir Percy and Lady Shelley, reported to Rossetti on June 21, 1870 "the Shelleys have been making a cremation of Shelley documents—including he fears papers about the separation from Harriet Ye Gods! ! ! "[18]

Caught between such cross-fires, what was Rossetti to do? He compromised, and constructed a mosaic of both accounts He went just as far as he dared in introducing the details of the Peacock-Trelawny-Browning versions of the Harriet story and added to them the contradictory Lady Shelley-Garnett versions He boldly dedicated his memoir, however, to Trelawny, and did include, but offered some palliation for, the facts of the

[16] *Letters of Robert Browning, op cit*, pages 222-223
[17] *Ibid*, page 223
[18] *Letters About Shelley*, pages 36-37

Hookham letters so discreditable to Shelley If we ask why he did this we find his answer to himself in his diary

> The chief point is about Shelley's separation from Harriet on which point I might myself be minded to uphold the authenticity and newness of what I have said, were it not that to do this would be to run down Shelley *pro tanto* [19]

In other words, his love and admiration for Shelley were so great that he could not go so far

But he unfortunately gave the official sanction of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* to Eliza's treatment of Harriet, and to the Godwins' scandal, by inserting, from the Shelley-family-sponsored view, the following paragraph

> The latest stages of the lovely and ill-starred Harriet's career have never been very explicitly recorded It seems that she formed a connexion with some gentleman from whom circumstances or desertion separated her, that her habits became intemperate, and that she was treated with contumelious harshness by her sister during an illness of their father She had always had a propensity (often laughed at in earlier and happier days) to the idea of suicide, and she now carried it out in act—possibly without anything which could be regarded as an extremely cogent predisposing motive, although the total weight of her distresses, accumulating within the past two years and a half, was beyond question heavy to bear Shelley, then at Bath, hurried up to London when he heard of Harriet's death, giving manifest signs of the shock which so terrible a catastrophe had produced on him Some self-reproach must no doubt have mingled with his affliction and dismay, yet he does not appear to have considered himself gravely in the wrong at any stage in the transaction, and it is established that in the train of quite recent events which immediately led up to Harriet's suicide he had borne no part.

When he was taken to task by Sir Percy for introducing the displeasing details from the Trelawny group he bowed to Sir Percy's suggestion and in his second revision of the *Memoir* (1878) added Lady Shelley's passages from the *Shelley Memorials,* exonerating Shelley.

Evidently Lady Shelley had got wind, perhaps from Garnett, that Rossetti was hot on the trail of the Harriet story and was consulting Browning and the arch-enemy Trelawny, and she had determined that the Shelley-Hookham letters, so positive in defence of Harriet, should never see the light of day for future biographers They may have been reduced to ashes before Dowden started looking for them, at Browning's suggestion, in 1883. On the other hand, it is possible that Allingham was mistaken in accusing the

[19] *Rossetti Papers,* page 499

Shelleys of such wanton destruction, and the Hookham letters may still exist If, then, they do, they may be in the possession of Lord Abinger, whose Shelley treasures, presented to his father by Lady Shelley, have never been fully revealed, or in the private collection of Sir John Shelley-Rolls Doubtless they were not presented with the other Shelley and Mary correspondence as part of the third share which went to the Bodleian, unless the treasures there are under greater restriction than we know.

Browning and Trelawny

As for Browning, no Victorian poet could be found who expressed in his work more completely, so that he seemed virtually to be advocating it, Shelley's romantic philosophy of love No poet after Shelley so stressed the divine moment of love as worth all life's remainder, no one's heroes or heroines gave themselves up so completely to Shelley's incessant quest for the divine moment of perfect passion It was the very life-blood of Browning's own philosophy – but with a difference Browning, however much he loved to reveal his passionate Italians entangled in perfervid romantic intrigues, always insisted that their love was spiritual Shelley would no doubt have agreed with Browning that "nor soul helps body more than body soul," but the vital distinction between the two men was that Shelley never hesitated when captivated by love to put his philosophy into practice, whereas Browning reserved it for his works and for a very few kid-gloved social philanderings in respectable Victorian circles, where he bounced about like a chattering social jackdaw When, to his astonishment and dismay, Lady Ashburton rejected his proposal of marriage, he wrote "I see now and then that contemptible Lady Ashburton and mind her no more than any other black beetle – so long as it don't [sic] crawl up my sleeve" Browning's moral earnestness and his Victorian respectabilities not only precluded his acceptance of the Shelley Legend constantly growing during these years, he could worship Shelley the divine poet as much as anyone and envy the one who saw "Shelley plain", but after reading Hookham's letters he could not and did not lend his approval to the attempt to whitewash Shelley's treatment of Harriet

Trelawny, knowing practically nothing of Shelley's early life – he did not, as we have seen, even know who Fanny Godwin was – had to resort to Claire for information and was quite astonished but never condemnatory at her revelations of Shelley's early love life With his cynical Regency point of view, he exclaimed: "Good God! the man should have been a Mormon", and went on to say it was too bad he could not have set up with Shelley a Mormon establishment When Browning ventured, therefore, to reprove Shelley's as well as Trelawny's morals, Trelawny's reaction was inevitable

> Browning is a worldly, self-seeking tuft-hunter, devoid of sympathy or sentiment, and his talk is obscene, and to me offensive· he has no feeling for Shelley, and is the last man you should use as medium to excuse the poet's desertion of Harriet [20]

But Rossetti, in spite of his deferences to Lady Shelley and Garnett, did not escape reproof from Boscombe Manor His fate was that of the man who tries to carry water on both shoulders In the letter quoted from the Abinger Collection (Boscombe MSS A) Miss Grylls in her biography of Mary Shelley transcribes only portions of Sir Percy's rebuke, omitting Harriet in her bracket as "a long story out of nothing"

This phrase, "a long story out of nothing", is as equivocal as any one of the tactics of Hunt, Mary, and Lady Shelley. Does Miss Grylls mean by the phrase (1) that there is no truth in the Harriet story or (2) that there is nothing in Sir Percy's passage on Harriet that is worth the reader's attention? If she means the former, why does she, like White, print the Wise letter in full as genuine, going even so far as to collate it with the Dowden version, and then make no deductions from this contretemps, while at the same time in her footnote (p. 76) she presents the Wise letter as "claiming" to be the original? If she means the latter, why does she omit Sir Percy's passage on Harriet and thereby continue the Mary Shelley-Lady Shelley method of suppression? Surely anything that Sir Percy wrote on Harriet is worth having for the record

Harriet purportedly sank with her burden beneath "the cleansing waters of death", to use Rossetti's phrase, in the winter of 1816 If it has taken one hundred and twenty-nine years to vindicate her from the slanders of the Godwin family and the machinations of their heirs, in spite of the efforts of Hogg, Peacock, Trelawny, Matthew Arnold, and Mark Twain, who dared speak out against a formidable cloud of false witnesses, we might be able, as Jeffrey says of Wordsworth's *Excursion,* "by means of a powerful calculus" to determine how many centuries must pass before Claire Clairmont's story is candidly told and she receives her vindication at the hands of posterity on the basis of facts No critic – with the eviscerated Claire and *Shelley and Mary* journals, or the altered correspondence, or the sources still suppressed – the Godwin diaries – or the undiscovered records, possibly destroyed with the bombing of Naples and the siege of Florence – may now be able to sift out the truth For Frances Winwar, in her review of Professor White's book, makes the pertinent suggestion that Professor White has further researches about Elena Adelaide to make in the foundling hospitals of Naples, and we add – in view of the deliberately altered correspondence

[20] *Trelawny, Edward John, Letters of,* edited, with a brief Introduction and Notes, by H Buxton Forman London, Oxford University Press, 1910 Page 251 The letter appears also in Wise's *A Shelley Library,* page 10

– in those of Rome and of Florence But here again in what of Sir Percy's letter Miss Grylls permits us to read is the hoary excuse about Ianthe (Mrs Esdaile), the very objection Rossetti had anticipated when he began He wrote to Swinburne

> Through Garnett or Allingham I could have easily got into communication with them, but I have avoided it, lest Lady Shelley should say "Pray say nothing painful about Harriet, consider poor Mrs Esdaile's feelings" Now I do consider Mrs Esdaile's feelings, but I consider still more the right which rational creatures have to understand such a specimen of the race as Shelley [21]

Sir Percy then goes on to accuse Rossetti of pandering to low tastes by going into these details, especially by mentioning Miss Clairmont, whose name for very good reasons the editor had entirely omitted in the *Shelley Memorials* They had all they could do to manage and live down the Harriet scandal, and they knew very well they could never cope with the Claire story if it ever became current.

Miss Grylls admits that she has dealt with the separation "simply as it appeared to Mary and Shelley at the time" – certainly a statement which, in view of her editorial omissions in Sir Percy's letter, casts no credit upon her as a candid biographer, nor does her unworthy fling at Trelawny as harbouring "an unreasonable prejudice against Lady Shelley, not to the credit of his good sense" If it were prejudice, it was widely shared by Hogg, Peacock, Trelawny, Jeaffreson, Dowden, and Rossetti, and by every one except Garnett, her literary adviser, and Forman, both beholden to her for many gifts of Shelley treasures, Hunt for his annuity.

Swinburne

Swinburne was always delighted at the parallels between Shelley's life and his own When he was writing his memoir of Shelley for the new edition of *Chambers's Encyclopaedia,* he wrote to his sister (November 25, 1902).

> I must say it is too funny—not to say uncanny—how much there is in common between us two, born in exactly the same class, sent to Eton at exactly the same age, cast out of Oxford—the only difference being that I was not formally but informally expelled—and holding and preaching the same general view in the poems which made us famous And yet nobody has even pretended to think me an imitator or follower of my elder born

[21] Wise, Thomas J *A Shelley Library,* page 131

On the contrary, Swinburne congratulated himself too soon His worst poetic vice, the substitution of excessive imagery and musical foam-water for meaning, he derived from Shelley's habit of pouring forth meaningless onomatopœia with an increasing ecstasy until he found himself "pinnacled dim in the intense inane", and presently finding he could not stay there, falling back to earth panting, trembling, and expiring

This is the aspect of Shelley's poetry that evoked Arnold's famous phrase "beautiful and ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain" – which made Swinburne wonder how a critic could survive such a judgment When to his immense rage he discovered in after years that Arnold *had* called him a "pseudo-Shelley," he retaliated with "pseudo-Wordsworth" Yet Swinburne, with all his gifts, rarely exhibits Shelley's powers to soar at all but, like the eight hoofs of the horses of his lovers in "Hesperia", gallops endlessly on and "rings in the ear of the low blind wind of the night as we pass".

The Shelley Diaries in Retrospect

In the account of the Hogg-Shelley-Mary-Claire episode of 1815 we have observed a representative sample of how the extant manuscript diaries have been handled since they were written The same condition prevails throughout the remaining years with deletions at all crucial points, for example, the Hoppner affair. We may observe in recapitulation how far we still are from an actual record of what went on, since so much is missing, so much has been tampered with, so much deleted or destroyed, and what remains in printed form comes to us selected by a biased editor

Following are some of the points to be taken into consideration·

1 Natural omissions for days when the principals wrote nothing

2 Pages torn out, presumably by Mary and Claire We do not know certainly whether Lady Shelley or Sir Percy or anyone else removed anything further from these manuscript records

3 Diaries available only through a bowdlerized printed version, entitled *Shelley and Mary,* put out by Lady Shelley in 1882, purportedly in only twelve copies for private distribution, but immediately recalled and supposedly suppressed at the insistence of Lady Dorchester

4 At least fourteen of these copies and their locations are at present known In most of them, but not all, Lady Shelley added notes, explanations, and admonitions to guide the reader to "proper" conclusions

5 Copies of even these printed versions have phrases and sentences cut out with scissors or knife by Lady Shelley—on page 612 are two lines cut out—when she discovered afterward to her distress that too much had escaped even into print

Lady Shelley prescribed further that the contents of her *Shelley and Mary* should not be available until thirty years after her death, 1929 – a needless provision, which precluded Professor Walter E Peck from using this primary source material Other material became available in 1922, one hundred years after the death of Shelley

6 The text of the manuscript, according to Dowden, differs throughout from Lady Shelley's printed version Not until Mr Wise graciously permitted Professor White to have a photostat made of Dowden's copy,[22] was the printed *Shelley and Mary* made accessible to biographers

Even now, not until the manuscript diaries themselves are available to scholars, without restrictions, and are collated with other undisclosed letters and papers, like the Godwin diaries, and forgeries are detected and discounted shall we have a reliable record of what has survived that Shelley and Mary actually wrote Shelley scholarship is still hampered by these barriers and kept at least three or four removes from the truth.

Since all the principals of Shelley's circle wrote daily diaries, as well as numerous letters of which numerous transcripts have been made, and numerous enemies wrote numerous stories about the bizarre activities of the group, it was an impossible task, even for the zeal of Lady Shelley, to suppress everything that would not sanctify the Shelley name It never seems to have occurred to her, as Fanny Imlay perceived, that Shelley's lyrical gifts were sufficient to glorify the Shelley name forevermore and that he had no need of the family apologetics or of the pious ministrations of biographers whom he would have been the first to loathe and to repudiate

4. LADY SHELLEY'S TREATMENT OF CLAIRE CLAIRMONT

The Detraction of Claire Clairmont in Kegan Paul's Life of Godwin

We have seen with what pains Lady Shelley excluded from her *Shelley Memorials* the part that Claire Clairmont played in Shelley's life. We may say that next to the Fanny Imlay episode – the hush-up of which was the most complete of all Shelley's affairs – Claire's relations with Shelley were the ones most satisfactorily silenced until Rossetti began his researches, made his journey to visit her, and included more favorable comment about her than had ever before appeared From her own lips he heard the story of her years in Shelley's household and from Trelawny also he obtained all that Claire

[22] Photostatic copy on deposit in the Library of Congress with a series of Mary Shelley's letters

had told him He included in his revised accounts as much of Claire's side of the story as he thought wise, laboring, as he was, under two handicaps, the disapproval of Lady Shelley and his pledge to Claire while living, not to disclose all she told him That he know her whole story but could not tell it during the lifetime of Claire and of Sir Percy and Lady Shelley seems clear from his note explaining his reticence because Claire was still living but hinting that the place of Claire in Shelley's life was much more than any one realized

The reaction of the Shelley family was immediate Sir Percy in a letter already quoted took Rossetti to task for catering to sensation lovers, deprecated his mention of Claire, and referred him to *Shelley Memorials* as a model of what should and should not have been mentioned In 1876, Lady Shelley followed this private protest by opening to Kegan Paul the Godwin diaries, letters, and journals for an official life of Mary's father In this work she succeeded in having Kegan Paul blame all of Mary and Shelley's difficulties upon the second Mrs Godwin and Claire, and in picturing Godwin as a long-suffering saint Mrs Clairmont was a harsh and unsympathetic step-mother and her daughter became the cause in after years of much sorrow to Godwin's daughter, Mary, afterwards Mrs Shelley [1]

> Claire's mission in life, according to her mother's view, was to have all the education and accomplishments which their slender means would admit, and more than they would admit, while household drudgery from an early age was discovered to be the life-work of Fanny and Mary Godwin [2]

This is a statement unsubstantiated anywhere else, even though Mrs Godwin was capable of anything There is no evidence that Fanny and Mary were shut out from the intellectual life of the Godwin group Claire, it turned out, was the most accomplished of the three in languages, wit, and social grace

Kegan Paul perpetuated the Lady Shelley sentimental description of the elopement Old St Pancras Churchyard was then a quiet and secluded spot, where Mary Wollstonecraft's grave was shaded by a fine weeping willow Here Mary Godwin used to take her books in the warm days of June—here her intimacy with Shelley ripened, and here, in Lady Shelley's words, "She placed her hand in his and linked her fortunes with his own" [3] Then, in a masterly paragraph, Kegan Paul summed up the Shelley family point of view

> Godwin's irritation and displeasure at the step his daughter had taken were extreme His own views on the subject of marriage

[1] Paul, C Kegan, *William Godwin His Friends and Contemporaries* Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1876 Vol II, p 58

[2] *Ibid*, Vol II, p 108

[3] *Ibid*, Vol II, p 215

> had undergone a considerable change, and he was more alive than in former years to the strictures of the world Nor is it possible for the most enthusiastic admirers of Shelley to palliate materially his conduct in the matter On any view of the relations between the sexes, on any view of the desirableness of divorce, the breach with Harriet, was far too recent to justify his conduct In spite of her after-conduct our sympathies cannot but be in some measure with the discarded wife But neither need they be refused to Mary Godwin Let it be remembered that she was not seventeen, that her whole sympathies were with her mother, who had held views on marriage, different indeed to those which her daughter was upholding by her action, but which a young inexperienced girl might easily confuse with them, that her home was unhappy, and that she had met one who was to her then, and through all her married life, as one almost divine, last and not least that she was upheld in all that she did by an astute and worldly woman, who, though no relation, stood to Mary in the place of an elder sister For Miss Clairmont indeed it is difficult to find excuse [4]

The truth is the exact opposite Mary, when she returned from Scotland, took Shelley away from Claire

The passage from Kegan Paul must have seemed almost perfection to Lady Shelley Almost, but not quite, for the passage contains a condemnation of one of Shelley's actions, but it absolves Mary, blames Mrs Godwin and Claire, excuses the doctrines of Mary Wollstonecraft, whitewashes Godwin, and pities and damns Harriet in the same sentence with its innuendo about her "after-conduct" The Shelleys, moreover, allowed to go uncorrected the statement that Claire was older than Fanny and Mary This mistake occurs several times in the biography and makes more plausible the charge that Mary was under Claire's influence·

> This was Mrs Clairmont, a widow, with a son then at school and one little daughter somewhat older than Fanny [5]
>
> She was several years older than Fanny, and even then led a somewhat independent life apart from her mother and stepfather, presumably as a governess [6]

As these and similar errors seem to perpetuate themselves in modern biographies, we may pause for a moment to set the record straight Curiously enough we find Miss Grylls stating on page 215 of her semi-fictionized biography of Claire Clairmont that Claire died on March 19, 1879, at the age of *ninety-one* and on the succeeding page that Trelawny lived until he was

[4] *Ibid*, Vol II, pp 217-218
[5] *Ibid*, Vol II, pp 57-58
[6] *Ibid*, Vol II, p 213

ninety-one Turning to Professor White's second volume, pages 385 and 388, strangely enough, we find these identical errors Paston and Quennell misstate Claire's age at death as eighty (*To Lord Byron,* Scribners, 1939, p 259) In volume II, p 313, Mrs Julian Marshall, also Rossetti, p 238, Helen Moore, p 346, Richard Church, p 175, give the date of Mary's death as February 21 What are the facts?

Claire was born on *April 27, 1798* and if she died on *March 19, 1879* (her tombstone carries both dates) she was in her eighty-first year, not ninety-one, and she was the *youngest* of the three girls in Godwin's household and not older than Mary or Fanny, and yet in volume I, page 644, Professor White, evidently following Kegan Paul, states that Claire "was several years older than Fanny"!

Fanny Imlay was born May 14, 1794, and died October 9, 1816, aged twenty-two

Mary Godwin was born August 30, 1797, and died February 1, 1851, aged fifty-four, not February 21 as in *Shelley Memorials.*

Claire Clairmont was born April 27, 1798, and died March 19, 1879, aged eighty-one not ninety-one

Trelawny was born on November 13, 1792, and died on August 13, 1881, and was, therefore, eighty-nine not ninety-one Claire was the youngest of the three girls, nearly four years younger than Fanny, nearly eight months younger than Mary

Miss Grylls also (page 11) calls Claire "the perfectly legitimate daughter of the practical Mrs Godwin and her Swiss merchant husband" Before accepting this assurance we should set beside it for whatever it is worth (and we should remember that this source though full of inaccurate and doubtful gossip is an invaluable record of what was being said and believed) this remarkable passage from Crabb Robinson's diary for August 30, 1819, reporting a conversation with Mary Hays, the close friend of Mary Wollstonecraft and the early Godwin set

> It is said she [Mrs Godwin] was never married, but was kept and abandoned by her keeper, or rather, left destitute at his death She was relieved by a charitable subscription, and taken out of a prison, on which she came up to town with her young children, met with Godwin at Somers Town and became certainly toward him a meritorious wife, though towards others I doubt both her sincerity and her integrity She had a son by a former husband, who bore the name of Clairmont—whether actually married to him or not is doubted—and a son by Godwin (I, 235)

The blame for Mary's elopement with Shelley, Kegan Paul also attaches to Claire. "Jane Clairmont's influence was neither then, nor at any other time, used, or likely to be used, judiciously" "There can be no doubt that had Fanny Godwin instead of Jane Clairmont been the guest of the Shelleys,

a far more wholesome, a far less disastrous influence would have been brought to bear upon their lives"

Many of the letters quoted are unfinished, many have passages deleted, and some passages are supposed to be lost This is interesting in view of Kegan Paul's statement that Godwin "never willingly destroyed a written line" He left a mass of papers Moreover, Mary Shelley had already gone over them and made her selection and commentary Perhaps she was responsible for what was destroyed

> But from causes into which there is here no need to enter, Mrs Shelley was only able in a measure to select those papers which seemed to her fittest for publication, and to draw up a few valuable notes, explanatory of otherwise forgotten circumstances Much as this is to be regretted, it may yet be that a freer handling than is possible to a daughter was needed for such a life and correspondence as is here presented Not however that a veil is lifted from particulars which Godwin's daughter would have desired to hide, she wished to conceal nothing of interest except in cases where some living person might be wounded, or some dear memory of the dead, and such danger has now almost or wholly ceased [7]

This statement may refer to Ianthe Esdaile, daughter of Harriet and Shelley, who died June 18, 1876

Fanny Imlay's suicide is given in the form we know in Dowden A sharp paragraph refutes the statement that she had been in love with Shelley "To Shelley, as to Mary, she was an attached sister, she was never in love with him, either before or after her sister's flight" [8]

Fanny Imlay

Against the finality of this bland assurance from the Shelley family, put forth in Kegan Paul's life of Godwin, and repeated with like assurance by Mrs Olwen W Campbell and other biographers ever since, there are many evidences to the contrary Professor White merely accepts the testimony of Paul and Mrs Marshall (I, 719)

Fanny had been the first of the three girls in Godwin's household to draw Shelley's attention as both Claire and Mary were away, and she had received his proselyting book, *Queen Mab,* which he was then distributing freely among other "little scions of infidelity". Her copy, bearing her signature and the shocked comment *"What!"* written in her autograph after the line "There is no God", is matched by her questioning at first the propriety

[7] *Ibid*, Vol I, p 2
[8] *Ibid*, Vol II, p 244

of receiving letters written in such unbridled fashion from a married man—a query that drew from Shelley his famous withering reply

"So you do not know whether it is *proper* to write to me I am one of those formidable and long-clawed animals called a *man,* and it is not until I have assured you that I am one of the most inoffensive of my species, that I live on vegetable food, and never bit since I was born, that I venture to intrude myself on your attention," etc Lacking the boldness of Mary, the fiery spirit of Claire, she displayed in her letters a morbid conscientiousness and a sensitivity that were exploited by those she loved most Crabb Robinson notes Lamb's report that Fanny approved of Shelley's elopement with Mary[9]—apparently even against the disapproval of Godwin, who declared that Claire in going along had "been guilty of indiscretion", Mary had "been guilty of a crime "[10]

Furthermore, Fanny was completely captivated by Shelley's poetry: "It is impossible to tell the good that poets do their fellow creatures, at least those that can feel . . If Shelley cannot accomplish any other good, he can this divine one "

Shelley's unfinished lyric after Fanny's suicide and his added note in Sir John Shelley-Rolls's *Verse and Prose,* 1934, would seem to reveal that Shelley became aware of Fanny's single and silent love for him, was deeply depressed over her death, and perhaps feeling himself partly responsible, added the usual self-defense on the reverse of the sheet of these verses (on which he also drew a sketch of a grave), "It is not my fault It is not to be alluded to "

[On Fanny Godwin]

Friend had I known thy secret grief

Her voice did quiver as we parted,
Yet knew I not that heart was broken
From which it came, and I departed
Heeding not the words then spoken
Misery—O Misery
This world is all too wide for thee

Some secret woes had been mine own,
And they had taught me that the good—
The pain—
And that for whom the lone and weary
The load of life is long and dreary,
Some hopes were buried in my heart
Whose spectres haunted me with sadness

[9] *Op cit,* Edith Morley I, 203 . "She fully approved of and vindicated her sister's conduct in living with Shelley "

[10] Godwin's letter to John Taylor, August 27, 1814, in Forman *The Elopement of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Godwin* The Bibliographical Society, 1911, p 16

Moreover, there are evidences that Shelley, then living in Marlow, was with her in London on September 11th and again on the 24th No explanation of Shelley's having gone to Bristol on September 30, ten days before Fanny's suicide, as recorded in the journal for that date, has been forthcoming Biographers have either overlooked or have attempted no explanation of what Shelley was doing in Bristol on that date

From these and other scattered evidences, such as Godwin's statement to Baxter "From the fatal day of Mary's elopement, Fanny's mind had been unsettled, her duty kept her with us, but I am afraid her affections were with them" (White I, 473), from Godwin and Shelley's successful efforts to hush up the affair completely, so that we do not even now know whether they claimed Fanny's body or where she was buried, Godwin's hurried trip to Swansea, October 10, and Shelley's equally hurried trip to Bristol the day before, and his return without news, his trip to Bristol again the next day, his journey thence to Swansea, obviously to meet Godwin, on the eleventh, and his return on the twelfth with the dismal news that Fanny had committed suicide on the ninth by taking laudanum, followed by Godwin's stern letter of October 13 not to go to Swansea – we get only an impression of Shelley's utter bewilderment and distraction Godwin wrote:

"My advice and earnest prayer is that you should avoid anything that leads to publicity Go not to Swansea, disturb not the silent dead, do nothing to destroy the obscurity she so much desired that now rests upon the event" Claire wrote to Byron, "We have spent a most dismal time Fanny has died and her death was attended by such melancholy circumstances as (at least for me) can never be forgotten Poor Shelley's health is broken up, and I never passed such wretched hours Everything is so miserable I often wish myself quite dead"

All of these, with many other circumstances, present a real problem for investigation requiring a separate study

Members of the Godwin circle, as contrasted with Sir Percy and Lady Shelley, entertained opposite views, Mrs Godwin, according to Dowden (II, 542-3), sent Fanny to Wales, on May 23, 1814, suspecting she was in love with Shelley Claire is responsible for the statement that Shelley was in love with Fanny and proposed to her in front of Mary, and that Fanny declined though she loved him (Garnett, *Letters About Shelley,* page 43). The lie that Godwin gave out to Baxter was that "she was seized with a cold in Wales which speedily turned to an inflammatory fever which carried her off" (White I, 473)

So silent was Fanny's departure into the great unknown, so complete was the silence following her decease that Charles Clairmont was still inquiring about her nearly a year after her death So far as is known Shelley was the only man to enter her life, and the only man closely associated with her in the days immediately before her death on October 9, 1816

From her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, who attempted suicide twice on the defection of Gilbert Imlay, Fanny, as well as Mary, inherited her mother's periods of inspissated gloom and her overpowering sense of failure and nothingness – and when the burdens of illegitimacy, of worry over Godwin's finances, of household drudgery, of nagging by Mrs Godwin, Claire, and Mary, of Shelley's flight with Mary became too great to be further endured, she succeeded where her mother had failed and partook of "the drugs that crowd around a woman's hand"

The Shelley family, however, regularly and insistently excused Mary's conduct in eloping with Shelley, on the grounds that she had been brought up on Godwinian ideas, and by the example of her mother, to regard the marriage tie with contempt Claire, in later years, complained grievously over this false upbringing

Yet in 1813 Godwin, alarmed at the notoriety his family was achieving, wrote to an inquiring correspondent a scuttling denial that Mary and Fanny were brought up entirely in the tradition of their mother's ideas on education "neither Mrs Godwin nor I have leisure enough for reducing novel theories of education to practice"[11] His expressions of disapproval about Mary and Shelley's elopement were an outgrowth of a perfectly consistent development into a contradictory attitude

Lady Shelley was probably pleased with this biography Godwin emerges from ridiculous situations without ridicule, Mary and Shelley without blame, Claire as the prime cause of their trouble This work is at once a biography and a rebuttal of a favorable view of Claire Clairmont coming forth from the researches of Rossetti

Mrs Marshall's Additions to the Detraction of Claire

After Dowden had been chosen to canonize Shelley, Lady Shelley cast around for someone to write the hagiography of Mary She selected Mrs Julian Marshall, who, as far as we know, gave her little trouble, her method is to show Mary to advantage by frequent comparison with Claire She does not employ the condemnatory methods of Kegan Paul, but with a semblance of fairness admits to Claire some virtues Into many of her descriptions of Claire, however, she inserts remarks that cannot fail to depreciate her in comparison with Mary Though much of Mrs Marshall's characterization of Claire is true, the frequency with which she comes out a poor second to Mary, with the same faults stressed over and over again, makes one

[11] Paul, *op cit*, Vol II, p 214

suspicious of Mrs Marshall's, and therefore Lady Shelley's, intentions toward her Mary in contrast is a study of noble perfection

> Although only sixteen and a half she was in the bloom of her girlhood, very pretty, very interesting in appearance, thoughtful and intelligent beyond her years [12]

> Jane Clairmont, of whose education not much is known beyond the fact that she was sometimes at school, was at home for a part if not all of this time She was lively and quick-witted, and probably rather unmanageable [13]

Mary's age offered an excuse for her actions

> Time, kindly judicious guidance, and sustained effort on her own part might have cleared Mary's path and made things straight for her Her heart was as sound and true as her intellect, but this critical time was rendered more dangerous, it may well be, by her knowledge of the existence of many theories on vexed subjects, making her feel keenly her own inexperience and want of a guide [14]

> When Jane came home it was on her that Mary was chiefly thrown for society Her lively spirits and quick wit made her excellent company, and she was ready enough to make the most of grievances, and to head any revolt [15]

Mrs Marshall makes it clear Jane wanted no guide

> Jane Clairmont, who cared no more for her mother than she did for anyone else, had guessed Mary's secret or insinuated herself into her confidence some time before the final *denouement* of the love affair Wild and wayward, ready for anything in the shape of a romantic adventure, and longing for freedom from the restraints of home, she had sympathised with, and perhaps helped Shelley and Mary She was in no wise anxious to be left to mope alone, nor to be exposed to cross-questioning she could ill have met She claimed to escape with them in return for her good offices, and whatever Mary may have thought or wished, Shelley was not one to leave her behind "in slavery "[16]

After several pages explaining why Mary thought it right to elope with Shelley, Mrs Marshall finds the great justification of her conduct

> The future of intellectual expansion and creation which might have been hers was not to be fully realised, but perfections of

[12] Marshall, Mrs Julian, *The Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley,* London, Richard Bentley and Sons, 1889, 2 vols, Vol I, p 38
[13] *Ibid*, Vol I, pp 33-34
[14] *Ibid*, Vol I, pp 40-41
[15] *Ibid*, Vol I, p 40
[16] *Ibid*, Vol I, pp 70-71

> character she might never have attained developed themselves as her nature was mellowed and moulded by time and by suffering [17]

Mrs Marshall denies any suggestion that Claire's character might also have developed under the guidance of Shelley

> Shelley's influence, as far as it was exerted at all, was used in favour of Jane's remaining with them, and he paid dearly in after years for the heavy responsibility he now assumed [18]

> Jane's presence added to their unsettlement, although at times it may have afforded them some amusement Wilful, fanciful, with a sense of humour and many good impulses, but with that decided dash of charlatanism which characterized the Clairmonts and little true sensibility, she was a willing disciple for any wild flights of fancy, and a keen participator in all impossible projects and harum-scarum makeshifts Her presence stimulated and enlivened Shelley, her whims and fancies did not seriously affect, beyond amusing him, and she was an indefatigable companion for him in his walks and wanderings, now that Mary was becoming less and less able to go about [19]

She reserves her slyest innuendo for a description of Claire's appearance

> Fill in the few details wanting, the flat, sleek, black hair, eyes so black that the pupil was hardly able to be distinguished from the iris, eyes which seemed unmistakably to indicate an admixture of Portuguese, if not of African blood in her descent – a complexion which may in girlhood have been olive, but in later life was sallow, – features not beautiful, and depending on expression for any charm they might have, – and she stands before the reader, the unmanageable, amusing, runaway schoolgirl, a stumbling block, first, then a bugbear to Byron, a curse, which he persistently treated as a blessing, to Shelley, a thorn in the side of Mary and of every one who ever was responsible for her [20]

Contrast the picture of Claire we find when we turn to Ethel Coburn Mayne's life of *Byron,* II (1912), (pp 59-60) "tall, with a lovely lissom figure, with masses of rich black hair, dark eyes that flashed or brooded, a fine sensitive mouth, and a singing voice which her master, Corri, likened to a string of pearls . one . who if not pretty [is] worse—her character and temperament—expressed in her brilliant and eager externality – all for love and liberty and emancipation, disdainful above all of marriage – [say-

[17] *Ibid*, Vol I, pp 66-67
[18] *Ibid*, Vol I, p 71
[19] *Ibid*, Vol I, p 88
[20] *Ibid*, Vol II, p 141

ing] – 'I can never resist the temptation of throwing a pebble at it as I pass by', disdainful too of 'masculine usurpation,' yet with moments of stormy and ecstatic submission to it, the very girl, in short, to fall in love with the ardent visitor at Skinner Street"

Underneath an excitable nervous temperament Claire had a hard core of integrity that kept her loyal to the memory of Shelley She refused Trelawny's and Henry Reveley's offers of marriage and perhaps another one made by a friend in Russia No one would say of her as Mrs Marshall says of Mary Shelley

> Blemishes or weaknesses were suppressed or overcome, and finally disappeared altogether [21]

As Professor Peck has written "It may safely be asserted that the constancy of Shelley's regard for her [Claire] is unmatched in the entire history of his many infatuations She was young, a veritable Haidee in type, high-spirited, mercurial, imaginative, interested in reading, writing, and discussion, and accomplished in languages She sang well, she did not believe in marriage, and was prepared to give herself freely to and for love She was 'a noble animal' as Shelley called Harriet, but like Mary she could also 'feel poetry and understand philosophy' – the two requirements Shelley desired embodied in one person That is why she held such permanent sway over him, especially after the Constantia poems of 1817, and afterward in Italy in spite of Mary's success in driving her out of the house twice"

On the other hand, she had no idea whatever of Byron's attitude toward love She went to him, after Shelley had returned to Mary, with the same free-love doctrines she had been brought up with, only to discover to her great disillusion and agony that Byron did not believe in the doctrine at all, but satirized the whole coterie as "Otaheite philosophers" For Byron there were only two kinds of women – good and bad – those you married, those you kept as mistresses, his point of view was always old-fashioned, eighteenth-century, and Continental, and the Godwinian-Shelley doctrine he greeted with ridicule and wanted none of it for his daughters, Allegra and Ada Moreover, Claire paid the penalty of forcing herself upon Byron, who was accommodating, but never pretended to love her, though charmed at moments on Lake Geneva, by her singing and companionship, which invoked his best lyric "There be none of beauty's daughters"

As he said of himself. "My heart always lights on the nearest perch", he once remarked that he was "the most seduced man in Europe", and of Claire's pursuit of him to Geneva, he wrote deprecatingly to Augusta Leigh (Sept 8, 1816), "Now, dearest, I do most truly tell thee, that I could not help this, that I did all I could to prevent it, and have at last put an end to it

[21] *Ibid*, Vol II, p 322

I was not in love, nor have any love left for any, but I could not exactly play the Stoic with a woman, who had scrambled eight hundred miles to unphilosophize me "

No woman, on the other hand, could under the circumstances have been more unwise, tactless, and demanding of Byron than Claire in her letters before the birth of Allegra as well as after, always veering between extreme expressions of love and antagonism, of abnegation, self-pity, and stinging accusation She invariably wrote the wrong thing, because she could not resist the temptation under Byron's neglect and scorn to assail his ego, and Byron never forgave any woman who talked back to him The letters of Claire to Byron, in the Paston-Quennell volume, *To Lord Byron* (1939, pp 202 ff), reveal that her temperament was too fiery, her spirit too independent to succeed as the mistress of anybody, and that the doctrine of free love for her as for Mary, though with a difference, brought suffering and disaster, as it had at the beginning to its first champion, Mary Wollstonecraft, with Gilbert Imlay All three women, however fervently they preached free love and assailed marriage, really required, like most women—and all men —the steadfast devotion of an untiring affection

The Legend of Claire Clairmont and the Hoppner Story

The legend of Claire Clairmont, begun so successfully by Kegan Paul and Mrs Marshall working under the ministrations of Lady Shelley, has, like the legend of Mary, continued to pervert and befog the interpretation of the Hoppner story – which, after being the scandal of London drawing-rooms at the time, has ever since been the cause of great debate Miss R Glynn Grylls in her recent semi-fictionized biography of Claire may be said to have written a classic paragraph of naive misinterpretation in explaining Claire's attitude toward Shelley, – a paragraph which leads us to wonder not only at the persistence of the legend today, but also how one who has had access to the diaries could have arrived at such conclusions (p. 85):

"It was not that she was in love with Shelley, either at this time or any other, for he had none of the qualities to strike the romantic imagination" [a strange statement when put beside Hogg's description of the electrical effect Shelley had upon all the women in every house he entered, and the long list of his admirers] But to continue "She was not passionate, her infatuation for Byron due to many factors besides sexual attraction, and she had no craving for marriage, an institution from which she revolted 'I can never resist the temptation of throwing a pebble at it as I pass by' " [No letters of the period are more passionate in their infatuation as well as in their agony than Claire's about Byron and Allegra Both Mary and she paraded their free-love doctrines like peacocks, but both really desired an undivided

loyalty, that is why both rejected Trelawny] Again "She may not have been above wanting to keep up with Mary by having a poet-lover of her own, but she never wanted to take Shelley from her" "She *may* not have been above wanting"? She *was not* above wanting "She never wanted to take Shelley away from Mary"? As we have demonstrated, the diaries have not been sufficiently suppressed to conceal either the tempestuous quarrels between Mary and Claire on this very score, or Mary's persistent efforts to get rid of Claire "Probably he was the one person in her life of whom she was genuinely fond" – a contradiction to the first sentence in this remarkable paragraph—"and if so she provided an instance [about the only one!] that proved his rule of love, for he certainly gave to her all that he could in patience and consideration and, in spite of relapses, she responded" What does this foggy sentence, properly stated, mean other than that Shelley and Claire loved each other – Shelley with a devotion he showed not even to Mary – witness his hurrying off to Venice with Claire to allay her fear about Allegra, leaving Mary alone with her little girl, Clara, and then asking Mary to travel after him with this child who presently died? He seems indeed to have been far more intent on the welfare of Allegra than on that of his own children He wrote to Mary from Ravenna, August, 1821 "Our first thought ought to be Allegra – Our second our own plans" (Ingpen X, p 314) That is one of the reasons why Byron at times was plagued with the suspicions of Joseph Until Shelley biographers forego dressing up the plain facts with sentimental drapery in this fashion, we shall never have the clear outlines Shelley biography so sorely needs

Let us retrace briefly Shelley's expressions of love for Claire, to gain a clear perspective of its growth after the "experiment" with Hogg of 1815, which ended, as we have seen, in violent quarrels and Claire's departure for Lynmouth.

As early as December 30, 1816, Shelley wrote Claire from London·

> Mrs G[odwin] presents herself to me in her real attributes of affectation, prejudice, and heartless pride Towards her, I confess I never feel an emotion of anything but antipathy Her sweet daughter is very dear to me [22]

No doubt because of her continued residence with Shelley and Mary, in succeeding days Claire received few letters from the former When she left their household again for Florence in October, 1820, more expressions of his affection began

> Keep up your spirit, my best girl, until we meet at Pisa But for Mrs Mason, I should say, come back immediately and give up a place so inconsistent with your feelings – as it is, I fear you

[22] Ingpen, Julian, IX, 214

had better endure – at least until you come here You know, however, whatever you shall determine on, where to find one ever affectionate Friend, to whom your absence is too painful for your return ever to be unwelcome [23]

He wrote again, in November

The great thing now is, if possible, to come to Pisa before you shall stand engaged for another month, or perhaps another three months – for such was the arrangement decided upon at Florence . How I long to see you again, to take what care I can of you—but do not imagine that if I did not most seriously think it best for you that I would advise you to return [24]

After her visit to Pisa and subsequent departure he wrote in this vein:

I had several times been going to write to you, to request you to love me better than you do – when meanwhile your letter arrives I wish to Heaven, my dear girl, that *I* could be of any avail to add to your pleasure or diminish your pain – how ardently you cannot know, you only know, as you frequently take care to tell me, how vainly [25]

When he feels it necessary to reassure her about his new regard for Emilia Viviani, he explains

There is no reason that you should fear any mixture of that which you call *love* My conception of Emilia's talents augments every day Her moral nature is fine but not above circumstances – yet I think her tender and true – which is always something [26]

To Lord Byron, however, he wrote (Sept. 14, 1821):

They have made a great fuss at Pisa about my intimacy with this lady Pray do not mention anything of what I told you, as the whole truth is not known and Mary might be very much annoyed at it [27]

He wrote again, probably in February, 1821, and sent Claire a check for two months' expenses

A thousand thanks for your affectionate letter, which to me is as water in the desert.[28]

[23] *Ibid*, X, pp 213-214
[24] *Ibid*, pp 223-226
[25] *Ibid*, pp 229-230
[26] *Ibid*, p 230
[27] *Ibid*, p 322
[28] *Ibid*, p 237

On April 13, he wrote

> Whatever I have or have not, however, is dear to me in possession chiefly as an instrument of your peace and independence [29]

On June 19, Claire visited them again at Pisa and remained until July 26 On August 4, Shelley again spent his birthday with her on his way to see Byron at Ravenna He warned Mary in a letter not to tell Claire he was on his way to see Byron because Claire might misunderstand, but he did not mention the fact that he was visiting Claire We can only conclude that Shelley did not want Mary to know he was visiting Claire Claire must have divined the purpose of his visit, because she was greatly upset for several days after Shelley had left

Almost all of October Claire spent with the Shelleys After her departure, Shelley wrote the disconsolate letter of December 11 quoted in Part I

From Pisa he wrote again

> Of course if you do not spend the summer with us I shall come to Florence and see and talk with you I was endeavouring to induce him [Lord Byron] to place Allegra in the institute at Lucca, but his jealousy of my regard for your interests will, since a conversation I had with him the other day, render him inaccessible to my suggestions Come and stay among us – If you like, come and look for houses with me in our boat – it might distract your mind [30]

On February 21, Claire again made a brief visit and left on the 25th

The letter from Shelley to Claire, written in March, 1822, when she was making wild plans to remove Allegra from the convent by forging a Byron order is a refusal to cooperate and a reproof for the "thoughtless violence" of her plans But he remained ever her guide and friend, begged her to calm herself and "live from day to day, attend to your health, cultivate literature and liberal ideas to a certain extent . . and let the *past* be the past". On April 11 he wrote:

> Come, my best girl, if you think fit, and assure yourself that everyone – I need not speak of myself – will be most happy to see you . . In fact, you had better resolve to be of our party in the country, where we shall go the moment the weather permits, and arrange all your plans for that purpose . Resolve to stay with us this summer, and remain where you are until we are ready to set off · – no one need know of where you are [31]

[29] *Ibid*, p 253
[30] *Ibid*, pp 355-356
[31] *Ibid*, pp 375-376

Although Claire's diary breaks off on April 13, a letter of Shelley's to Mary on April 28 reveals that she was with Mary, and one from Shelley to Mrs Godwin, May 29, that she had returned to Florence.

On May 29 he wrote to Claire

> Tell me when we are to expect you . . . I think that at least for the present you would be happier here than anywhere else [32]

And again, in a letter postmarked May 31

> I think that you would be happier here, and indeed always with or near me Say when we are to come to meet you [33]

She must have arrived before June 18, for on that date, Shelley wrote to John Gisborne "Claire is with us . She is vivacious and talkative, and though she teases me sometimes, I like her "[34]

The Hoppner Story

What would seem to be the plain facts of the Hoppner story? That Shelley had a child by Claire, and in trying to cover up the embarrassment resorted to the falsification of the birth certificate, and was also involved in a legal snarl of blackmail (at first unknown to Mary) attempted by his rascally servant, Paolo Foggi The child was born in Naples—Shelley referred to her in letters to the Gisbornes as his "Neapolitan charge", and mourned that his poor Neapolitan had died She perished like his other children, William and Clara, of Italian fever He was accused of having put the child away in a foundling hospital in Florence. He was very furtive while the affair was going on and asked both Claire and the Gisbornes to address him under false names—"Mr Jones" and "Joe James", "Medwin", and "Hodgson" Shelley, moreover, told Medwin a variant Neapolitan story of having been pursued by a beautiful and devoted lady who declared a hopeless love for him This Medwin story Shelley invented as a smoke screen and, as we shall see, it was subsequently carefully married by Dowden to the Hoppner story

Shelley biographers have been content to take at their face value the fulsome declarations of innocence in Shelley's and Mary's letters to each other Shelley devotees are naturally horrified that anyone could for a moment question the sincerity and the obvious disgust with which Shelley and Mary repel the charge, and they are indignant that anyone could accept the testimoney of low scandal-mongers and blackmailers like the Hoppners, Elise, and

[32] *Ibid*, p 395
[33] *Ibid*, p 397
[34] *Ibid*, p 403

Foggi as against that of Shelley and Mary to each other, and no amount of evidence will ever serve to move them They were resting peacefully content in their conviction until Professor White gave them a shock by unearthing in Naples the public records of the birth certificate, baptism, and death of a child, Elena Adelaide Shelley, and demonstrated that there was, as in all other Shelley scandals, some basis of fact for what was being gossiped about

It is doubtful, however, whether Shelley biography will benefit by Professor White's tortuous efforts to construct an apologetic explanation for this unexpected child, in order to relieve Shelley and his own embarrassment over the discovery—namely, that the child was not Claire's and Shelley's or Shelley's and Mary's, as the record states, but one picked up somewhere by Shelley and adopted to comfort Mary Let us now examine the mooted points of this very controversial problem, with full recognition that there is a balance of evidence on both sides which cannot, because of the suppressed evidence in diaries and letters, be regarded as coercive or final

This troublesome episode in Shelley's hectic career was peddled by Elise, the Shelley's Swiss maid, to Foggi her lover (and afterward her husband by the insistence of Mary) Foggi, who tried blackmail, had to be taken in hand and silenced by Del Rosso, Shelley's lawyer Elise peddled the tale also to the British consul at Venice, R B Hoppner and his wife, and from the Hoppners it soon spread to the English residents in Italy, became the buzz and scandal of the time, and when duly transported to England served to raise the temperature of the outraged respectables to fever heat against Shelley, resulting in the moral backfire from Southey, from the *Literary Gazette* and other periodicals Hoppner told the tale to Byron in order to persuade Byron to break relations with the Shelley "seraglio" and not allow them or Claire to have anything more to do with Allegra

The letters in the case, so far as they have been preserved—for the last paragraphs of two of Shelley's letters to Mary have been either suppressed or lost—are here reproduced Hoppner wrote to Byron from Venice, September 16, 1820 [Murray's *Lord Byron's Correspondence*, II, 180-3]

> . You are surprised, and with reason, at the change of my opinion respecting Shiloe [35] it certainly is not that which I once entertained of him but if I disclose to you my fearful secret, I trust, for his unfortunate wife's sake, if not out of regard to Mrs Hoppner and me, that you will not let the Shelleys know that we are acquainted with it This request you will find so reasonable that I am sure you will comply with it, and I therefore proceed to divulge to you, what indeed on Allegra's account

[35] Nickname of Shelley

it is necessary that you should know, as it will fortify you in the good resolution you have already taken never to trust her again to her mother's care

You must know then that at the time the Shelleys were here Clare was with child by Shelley you may remember to have heard that she was constantly unwell, and under the care of a Physician, and I am uncharitable enough to believe that the quantity of medicine she then took was not for the mere purpose of restoring her health I perceive too why she preferred remaining alone at Este, notwithstanding her fear of ghosts and robbers, to being here with the Shelleys Be this as it may, they proceeded from here to Naples, where one night Shelley was called up to see Clara who was very ill His wife, naturally, thought it very strange that he should be sent for, but although she was not aware of the nature of the connexion between them, she had had sufficient proof of Shelley's indifference, and of Clara's hatred for her besides as Shelley desired her to remain quiet she did not dare to interfere A Mid-wife was sent for, and the worthy pair, who had made no preparation for the reception of the unfortunate being she was bringing into the world, bribed the woman to carry it to the Pietà, where the child was taken half an hour after its birth, being obliged likewise to purchase the physician's silence with a considerable sum During all the time of her confinement Mrs Shelley, who expressed great anxiety on her account, was not allowed to approach her, and these beasts, instead of requiting her uneasiness on Clara's account by at least a few expressions of kindness, have since increased in their hatred for her, behaving to her in the most brutal manner, and Clara doing everything she can to engage her husband to abandon her Poor Mrs Shelley, whatever suspicions she may entertain of the nature of their connexion, knows nothing of their adventure at Naples, and as the knowledge of it could only add to her misery, 'tis as well that she should not This account we had from Elise, who passed here this summer with an English lady who spoke very highly of her She likewise told us that Clara does not scruple to tell Mrs Shelley she wishes her dead, and to say to Shelley in her presence that she wonders how he can live with such a creature Thus you see that your expression with regard to her is *even too delicate*, and I think with you, not only that she is a ——— ———, but anything worse even than you can say of her I hope this account will encourage you to persevere in your kind attentions to poor little Allegra, who has no-one else to look up to I cannot conceive what Clare can mean by her impertinence to you She ought to be too happy to reflect that the child is so well taken care of Mrs Hoppner was so angry when she heard the above account that

it was with difficulty she was prevailed upon not to write to the Shelleys and upbraid them with their infamous conduct However, as this could have been productive of no good, it was better to leave them to themselves, the more particularly as she had already written to decline interfering in the affair of her child, and there was every probability of our not being troubled any more with them Besides that, in pity for the unfortunate Mrs Shelley, whose situation would only have been rendered worse by the exposure, silence on these matters was still more incumbent on her I think after this account you will no longer wonder that I have a bad opinion of Shelley His talents I acknowledge but I cannot concur that a man can be, as you say, "crazy against morality," and have honour I have heard of honour among thieves, but there it means only interest, and though it may be to Shelley's interest to cut as respectable a figure as he can with the opinions he publickly professes, it is clear to me that honour does not direct any one of his actions I fear my letter is written in a very incoherent style, but as I really cannot bring myself to go over this disgusting subject a second time, I hope you will endeavor to comprehend it, as it stands

Byron replied to this letter on October 1, 1820

My dear Hoppner
Your letters and papers came very safely, though slowly, missing one post The Shiloh story is true no doubt, though Elise is but a sort of *Queen's evidence* You remember how eager she was to return to them, and then she goes away and abuses them Of the facts, however, there can be little doubt, it is just like them You may be sure that I keep your counsel I enclose an epistle from Shiloh

Yours ever and truly, Byron

When Shelley visited Byron at Ravenna in August, 1821, Byron's curiosity and maliciousness proved too great for him to keep Hoppner's counsel as he had promised, and he charged Shelley with the story Evidently Shelley's violent repudiation of it failed to convince Byron permanently Because of Shelley's free-love principles, which now worked heavily against him, his marked attentions to Claire and his solicitude in her behalf for Allegra, Byron was plagued at times as to whether, indeed, he or Shelley was Allegra's father. Had he ever been really convinced of his suspicion, he would not have felt under as much obligation to the child as he assumed; but the Hoppner tale proved useful as a means of getting rid of Claire's importunities over the child and also as something to hold over the Shelleys, and like Iago, he did "as if for certainty". What was Shelley to do? His only means of convincing Byron was to write to Mary and instruct

her to deny the story, if she thought it false, in a letter addressed to Mrs Hoppner He wrote Mary on August 7 from Ravenna as follows

Ravenna, August 7, 1821

My dearest Mary,

I arrived last night at ten o'clock, and sat up talking with Lord Byron until 5 this morning I then went to sleep, and now awake at eleven, and having despatched my breakfast as quick as possible, mean to devote the interval until 12, when the post departs, to you

Lord Byron is very well, and was delighted to see me He has in fact completely recovered his health, and lives a life totally the reverse of that which he led at Venice He has a permanent sort of liaison with Contessa Guiccioli, who is now at Florence, and seems from her letters to be a very amiable woman She is waiting there until something shall be decided as to their emigration to Switzerland or stay in Italy, which is yet undetermined on either side She was compelled to escape from the Papal territory in great haste, as measures had already been taken to place her in a convent, where she would have been unrelentingly confined for life The oppression of the marriage compact as existing in the laws and opinions of Italy, though less frequently exercised, is far severer than that of England I tremble to think of what poor Emilia is destined to

Lord Byron had almost destroyed himself at Venice his state of debility was such that he was unable to digest any food, he was consumed by hectic fever, and would speedily have perished but for this attachment, which reclaimed him from the excesses into which he threw himself from carelessness and pride rather than taste Poor fellow – he is now quite well and immersed in politics and literature He has given me a number of the most interesting details on the former subject, but we will not speak of them in a letter Fletcher is here, and as if like a shadow he waxed and waned with the substance of his master, Fletcher also has recovered his good looks and from amidst the unseasonable grey hairs, a fresh harvest of flaxen locks put forth

We talked a great deal of poetry and such matters last night, and as usual differed and I think more than ever He affects to patronise a system of criticism fit for the production of mediocrity, and although all his fine poems and passages have been produced in defiance of this system yet I recognise the pernicious effects of it in the "Doge of Venice"; and it will cramp and limit his future efforts however great they may be unless he gets rid of it I have read only parts of it, or rather he himself read them to me, and gave me the plan of the whole

Allegra, he says, is grown very beautiful but he complains that her temper is violent and imperious He has no intention of leaving her in Italy, indeed the thing is too improper in itself not to carry condemnation along with it Contessa Guiccioli he says is very fond of her, indeed I cannot see why *she* should not take care of it, [*sic*] if she is to live as his ostensible mistress All this I shall know more of soon

Lord Byron has also told me of a circumstance that shocks me exceedingly, because it exhibits a degree of desperate and wicked malice for which I am at a loss to account When I hear such things my patience and my philosophy are put to a severe proof, whilst I refrain from seeking out some obscure hiding place, where the countenance of man may never meet me more It seems that *Elise,* actuated either by some inconceivable malice for our dismissing her, or bribed by my enemies, or making common cause with her infamous husband, has persuaded the Hoppners of a story so monstrous and incredible that they must have been prone to believe any evil to have believed such assertions upon such evidence Mr Hoppner wrote to Lord B to state this story as the reason why he declined any further communications with us, and why he advised him to do the same Elise says that Clare was my mistress that is all very well and so far there is nothing new all the world has heard so much, and people may believe or not believe as they think good She then proceeds to say that Clare is with child by me, that I gave her the most violent medicine to produce abortion – that this not succeeding she was brought to bed, and that I immediately tore the child from her and sent it to the foundling hospital I quote Mr Hoppner's words – and this is stated to have happened in the winter after we left Este In addition, she says that both I and Clare treated *you* in the most shameful manner, that I neglected and beat you, and that Clare never let a day pass without offering you insults of the most violent kind, in which she was abetted by me

As to what Reviews and the world says, I do not care a jot, but when persons who have known me are capable of conceiving of me – not that I have fallen into a great error and impudence, as would have been the living with Clare as my mistress – but that I have committed such unutterable crimes as destroying or abandoning a child, and that my own – imagine my despair of good, imagine how it is possible that one of so weak and sensitive a nature as mine can run further the gauntlet through this hellish society of men *You* should write to the Hoppners a letter refuting the charge, in case you believe, and know, and can prove that it is false, stating the grounds and proofs of your belief I need not dictate what you should say, nor, I hope, inspire you with warmth to rebut a charge, which you only can

effectually rebut If you will send the letter to me here, I will forward it to the Hoppners Lord Byron is not up, I do not know the Hoppners' address, and I am anxious not to lose a post (Ingpen, Julian X, pp 296-299)

Unfortunately, the rest of this letter is missing Mary wrote at once, enclosing a letter to Mrs Hoppner

My dear Shelley,

Shocked beyond all measure as I was, I instantly wrote the enclosed If the task be not too dreadful, pray copy it for me, I cannot

Read that part of your letter that contains the accusation I tried, but I could not write it I think I could as soon have died I send also Elise's last letter, enclose it or not as you think best

I wrote to you with far different feelings last night, beloved friend Our barque is indeed "tempest-tost," but love me as you have ever done, and God preserve my child to me, and our enemies shall not be too much for us Consider well if Florence be a fit residence for us I love, I own, to face danger, but I would not be imprudent

Pray get my letter to Mrs Hoppner copied for a thousand reasons Adieu, dearest! Take care of yourself – all yet is well. The shock for me is over, and I now despise the slander, but it must not pass uncontradicted I sincerely thank Lord Byron for his kind unbelief

Affectionately yours,
M W S

Friday

Do not think me imprudent in mentioning Claire's illness at Naples It is well to meet facts They are as cunning as wicked I have read over my letter, it is written in haste, but it were as well that the first burst of feeling should be expressed. No letters (Grylls, *Mary Shelley,* pp 148-9)

Where did Mary get the idea that Lord Byron disbelieved the story? In the strangely missing last paragraphs of Shelley's letter? If Byron already disbelieved it, why did the Shelleys not send the denial straight to the Hoppners? It is true Shelley said he did not know their address, but for such an important purpose he could have taken pains to get it

At least as late as December 10, 1821, Byron showed by innuendo in a letter to Murray that he still suspected Claire and Shelley of responsibility for a child His remarkable letter to Murray on that date with the parenthesis "(as far at least as *I* am concerned)"—reveals his lingering suspicion.

Pisa, December 10th, 1821

This day and this hour (one, on the clock), my daughter is six years old I wonder when I shall see her again, or if ever I shall see her at all

I have remarked a curious coincidence, which almost looks like a fatality

My *mother,* my *wife,* my *daughter,* my *Half-sister,* my *sister's mother,* my natural daughter (as far at least as *I* am concerned), and *myself,* are all *only children*

My father, by his first marriage with Lady Conyers (an only child), had only my sister, and by his second marriage with an only child, an only child again Lady Byron, as you know, was one also, and so is my daughter, &c

Is not this rather odd—such a complication of only children? By-the-way, send me my daughter Ada's miniature I have only the print, which gives little or no idea of her complexion

Yours, &c
B

We have also the unmistakable deviltry of Byron's talk to Elise about Allegra, reported in Claire's letter to Trelawny

"She will grow up a very pretty woman and then I will take her for my mistress" Elise was shocked and said, "I suppose My Lord you are joking, but even as a joke, it is a very improper one" He answered he was not joking at all "I'll do it" She seemed still further shocked He then said – "I can very well do it – she is no child of mine – She is Mr Shelley's child" (Grylls, *Claire Clairmont,* p 263)

Mary evidently believed that her only recourse, if they were to live on in Italy and satisfy Byron and not be driven out by scandal as they had been at Marlow, was to comply with Shelley's request in an effort to silence the gossip Shelley's critics have generally taken Shelley's appeal to Mary at this crisis, and Mary's reply, at their face value Both letters, however, are equivocal in their statements and Mary's is written to order for the Hoppners and Lord Byron, at Shelley's urgent and express request.

Mary, at Shelley's behest, wrote to Mrs Hoppner from Pisa on August 11 in this fashion, forwarding the letter first to Shelley who was to show it to Byron who would transfer it to Mrs Hoppner and thereby silence the source of the "hideous" tale:

Pisa, August 11, [10] 1821.

My Dear Mrs Hoppner,

After a silence of nearly two years I address you again, and most bitterly do I regret the occasion on which I now write Pardon me that I do not write in French, you understand English

well, and I am too much impressed to shackle myself in a foreign language, even in my own my thoughts far outrun my pen, so that I can hardly form the letters I write to defend him to whom I have the happiness to be united, whom I love and esteem beyond all creatures, from the foulest calumnies, and to you I write this, who were so kind [and] to Mr Hoppner, to both of whom I indulged the pleasing idea that I have every reason to feel gratitude This is indeed a painful task

Shelley is at present on a visit to Lord Byron at Ravenna, and I received a letter from him to-day containing accounts that make my hand tremble so much that I can hardly hold the pen It tells me that Elise wrote to you relating the most hideous stories against him, and that you have believed them Before I speak of these falsehoods permit [me] to say a few words concerning this miserable girl You well know that she formed an attachment with Paolo when we proceeded to Rome, and at Naples their marriage was talked of We all tried to dissuade her, we knew Paolo to be a rascal, and we thought so well of her that we believed him to be unworthy of her An accident led me to the knowledge that without marrying they had formed a connexion, she was ill, we sent for a doctor who said there was danger of a miscarriage I would not turn the girl on the world without in some degree binding her to this man We had them married at Sir W A 'Court's – she left us, turned Catholic at Rome, married him, and then went to Florence After the disastrous death of my child we came to Tuscany We have seen little of them, but we have had knowledge that Paolo has formed a scheme of extorting money from Shelley by false accusations – he has written him threatening letters, saying that he wd be the ruin of him, &c We placed these in the hands of a celebrated lawyer here who has done what he can to silence him Elise has never interfered in this, and indeed the other day I received a letter from her, entreating with great professions of love that I would send her money I took no notice of this, but although I knew her to be in evil hands, I would not believe that she was wicked enough to join in his plans without proof

And now I come to her accusations—and I must indeed summon all my courage while I transcribe them, for tears will force their way, and how can it be otherwise? You knew Shelley, you saw his face, and could you believe them? Believe them only on the testimony of a girl whom you despised? I had hopes that such a thing was impossible, and that although strangers might believe the calumnies that this man propagated, none who had ever seen my husband could for a moment credit them

part of Shelley's letter that you may see what I am now about

She says Clare was Shelley's mistress, that – upon my word, I solemnly assure you that I cannot write the words, I send you a

to refute – but I had rather die that [sic] copy anything so vilely, so wickedly false, so beyond all imagination fiendish

I am perfectly convinced in my own mind that Shelley never had an improper connexion with Clare – at the time specified in Elise's letter, the winter after we quitted Este, I suppose while she was with us, and that was at Naples, we lived in lodgings where I had momentary entrance into every room, and such a thing could not have passed unknown to me The malice of the girl is beyond all thought – I now remember that Clare did keep her bed there for two days – but I attended on her – I saw the physician – her illness was one that she had been accustomed to for years – and the same remedies were employed as I had before ministered to her in England

Clare had no child – the rest must be false – but that you should believe it – that my beloved Shelley should stand thus slandered in your minds – he the gentlest and most humane of creatures, is more painful to me, oh far more painful than any words can express

It is all a lie – Clare is timid; she always showed respect even for me – poor dear girl! She has some faults – you know them as well as I – but her heart is good, and if ever we quarrelled, which was seldom, it was I, and not she, that was harsh, and our instantaneous reconciliations were sincere and affectionate

Need I say that the union between my husband and myself has ever been undisturbed Love caused our first imprudence, love which improved by esteem, a perfect trust one in the other, a confidence and affection which, visited as we have been by severe calamities (have we not lost two children?) has encreased [sic] daily, and knows no bounds

I will add that Clare has been separated from us for about a year She lived with a respectable German family at Florence The reasons of this were obvious – her connexion with us made her manifest as the Miss Clairmont, the mother of Allegra – besides we live much alone – she enters much into society there – and solely occupied with the idea of the welfare of her child, she wished to appear such that she may not be thought in aftertimes to be unworthy of fulfilling the maternal duties You ought to have paused before you tried to convince the father of her child of such unheard-of atrocities on her part If his generosity and knowledge of the world had not made him reject the slander with the ridicule it deserved what irretrievable mischief you would have occasioned her!

Those who know me will believe my simple word – it is not long ago that my father said in a letter to me, that he had never known me to utter a falsehood – but you, easy as you have been to credit evil, who may be more deaf to truth – to you I swear – by all that I hold sacred upon heaven and earth by a vow

which I should die to write if I affirmed a falsehood – I swear by the life of my child, by my blessed and beloved child, that I know these accusations to be false

Shelley is as incapable of cruelty as the softest woman To those who know him this humanity is almost as a proverb He has been unfortunate as a father, the laws of his country and death has [*sic*] cut him off from his dearest hopes But his enemies have done him incredible mischief – but that you should believe such a tale coming from such a hand, is beyond all belief, a blow quite unexpected, and the very idea of it beyond words shocking

But I have said enough to convince you, and are you not convinced? are not my words the words of truth? Repair, I conjure you, the evil you have done by retracting your confidence in one so vile as Elise, and by writing to me that you now reject as false every circumstance of her infamous tale

You were kind to us, and I shall never forget it, now I require justice, you must believe me, I solemnly entreat [sic] you, the justice to confess that you do so

Mary W Shelley

I send this letter to Shelley at Ravenna, that he may see it For although I ought, the subject is too odious to me to copy it I wish also that Lord Byron should see it He gave no credit to the tale, but it is as well that he should see how entirely fabulous it is (Grylls, *Mary Shelley*, pp 151-154)

These two letters of Shelley's and Mary's, and the following excerpts from other letters, round out the story On August 16, Shelley wrote to Mary

Ravenna,
Thursday [August 16, 1821]

I have received your letter with that of Mrs Hoppner I do not wonder my dearest friend that you should have been moved with the infernal accusation of Elise I was at first but speedily regained the indifference which the opinion of any thing, or any body, except our own consciousness amply merits and day by day shall more receive from me I have not recopied your letter, such a measure would necessarily destroy its authenticity, but have given it to Lord Byron, who has engaged to send it with his own comments to the Hoppners People do not hesitate it seems to make themselves panderers and accomplices to slander, for the Hoppners had exacted from Lord Byron that these accusations should be concealed from *me* Lord Byron is not a man to keep a secret good or bad – but in openly confessing that he has not done so he must observe a certain delicacy, and therefore he wishes to send the letter himself, and

indeed this adds weight to your representations Have you seen the article of the Literary Gazette on me? They evidently allude to some story of this kind – however cautious the Hoppners have been in preventing the calumniated person from asserting his justification, you know too much of the world not to be certain that this was the utmost limit of their caution So much for nothing

Lord Byron is immediately coming to Pisa He will set off the moment I can get him a house Who would have imagined this? Our first thought ought to be Allegra – Our second our own plans The hesitation in your letter about Florence has communicated itself to me, although I hardly see what we can do about Horace Smith to whom our attentions are so due and would be so useful If I do not arrive before this long scrawl write something to Florence to decide me I shall certainly, not without strong reasons at present *sign* the agreement for the old codger's house, although the extreme beauty and fitness of the place, should we decide on Florence might well over balance the objection of your deaf visitor One thing – with Lord Byron and the people we know at Pisa we should have a security and protection which seems to be more questionable at Florence But I do not think this consideration ought to weigh What think you of remaining at Pisa? The Williams would probably be induced to stay there if we did – Hunt would certainly stay at least this winter near us, should he emigrate at all, Lord Byron and his Italian friends would remain quietly there, and Lord Byron has certainly a great regard for us – the regard of such a man is worth – *some* of the tribute we must pay to the base passions of humanity in any intercourse with those within its circle, he is better worth it than those on whom we bestow it from mere custom The Masons are there, and as far as solid affairs are concerned are my friends I allow this is an argument for Florence Mrs Mason's perverseness is very annoying to me especially as Mr Tighe is seriously my friend and this circumstance makes me averse from that intimate continuation of intercourse which, once having begun, I can no longer avoid

At Pisa I need not distil my water – if I *can* distil it anywhere Last winter I suffered less from my painful disorder than the winter I spent at Florence The arguments for Florence you know, and they are very weighty, judge (*I know you like the job*), which scale is overbalanced

My greatest content would be utterly to desert all human society I would retire with you and our child to a solitary island in the sea, would build a boat, and shut upon my retreat the floodgates of the world I would read no reviews, and talk with no authors If I dared trust my imagination it would tell me that there were two or three chosen companions besides your-

self whom I should desire But to this I would not listen – where two or three are gathered together the devil is among them And good far more than evil impulses – love far more than hatred, has been to me, except as you have been its object, the source of all sort of mischief So on this plan, I would be *alone,* and would devote either to oblivion or to future generations the overflowings of a mind which, timely withdrawn from the contagion, should be kept fit for no baser object But this it does not appear that we shall do

The other side of the alternative (for a medium ought not to be adopted) is to form for ourselves a society of our own class, as much as possible in intellect, or in feelings, and to connect ourselves with the interests of that society Our roots never struck so deeply as at Pisa, and the transplanted tree flourishes not People who lead the lives which we led until last winter, are like a family of Wahabee Arabs, pitching their tent in the midst of London We must do one thing or the other – for yourself for our child, for our existence These calumnies, the sources of which are probably deeper than we perceive, have ultimately for object the depriving us of the means of security and subsistence You will easily perceive the gradations by which calumny proceeds to pretext, pretext to persecution, and persecution to the ban of fire and water It is for this, and not because this or that fool, or the whole court of fools, curse and rail, that calumny is worth refuting or chastising

[Unfinished, lost or destroyed]

Ingpen, Julian X, 313-316

From the letters of Mary to the Gisbornes we have, in Jones (*op. cit,* I, page 108), dated June 18, 1820

The truth is, my dear friend, a variety of circumstances have occurred not of the most pleasant nature, since you left us and have been obliged to reform our plans – We could not go to the baths of Lucca and finding it necessary to consult an attorney we thought of Del Rosso & came here – Are you pleased or vexed? Our old friend Paolo was partly the cause of this – by entering into an infamous conspiracy against us – there were other circumstances that I shall not explain till we meet – That same Paolo is a most superlative rascal – I hope we have done with him but I know not – since as yet we are obliged to guess as to his accomplices

Do you know we lose many letters – having spies (not Government ones) about us in plenty – they made a desperate push to do us a desperate mischief lately – but succeeded no further than to blacken us among the English – so if you receive a fresh batch (or green bag) of scandal against us – I assure you it is

> all a *lie* poor souls we live innocently as you well know – if we did not ten to one God wd take pity on us & we shd not be so unfortunate [36]

These letters of Shelley's and Mary's on the Hoppner affair have usually been taken as final evidence in their behalf, but the following discrepancies, some of them inaccuracies or untruths, cast doubt on the reliability of both and can lead only to the conclusion that Shelley and Mary were making the best of a bad situation they had hoped to conceal Shelley's letter, on the other hand, may be only a proof of Hogg's assertion that Shelley with a poet's imagination could never tell a tale twice alike It has also been suggested that Shelley's account may be based not on Hoppner's letter but on Byron's exaggerated rehearsal of its content, that it is not absolutely certain that Byron showed him the letter, though he would likely have done so to prove Hoppner made the charges, that Byron, as Shelley says, "told" him, and the exaggerations therefore may be Byron's rather than Shelley's Moreover, it may be justly contended that errors in detail in repeating the charges do not necessarily disprove the sincerity of Shelley's denial, on the other hand, it may be contended that they convey the impression of embarrassment, equivocation or a heightening of the story to move Mary into strong protestations Shelley does give evidence that he had read the Hoppner letter, for in another place he says "I quote Mr Hoppner's words" [Ingpen, *ibid,* 298] Obviously, he did not quote Hoppner's words

1 Hoppner did not say that Shelley gave Claire an abortifacient, he said Claire took one

2 He did not say that Shelley "tore the child from her"

3 He did not say that Shelley beat Mary

4 He did not accuse Shelley of *destroying* a child, but charged him with abandoning it

5 Shelley's request that Mary write to the Hoppners refuting the charge "in case you believe, and know, and can prove that it is false, stating the grounds and proofs of your belief" is strange vocabulary, revealing that he was not sure of his wife's faith in him, or whether she could or would comply with sufficient warmth to be convincing

6 Shelley does not deny that Claire has been his mistress He merely states that such an affair would have been "a great error and impudence" [probably should be "imprudence"], that "all the world has heard so much, and people may believe or not believe as they think good"—phrases that are, to say the least, equivocal and hardly pass for a stout denial of the truth of the charge

[36] *Ibid*, page 114, dated August 17, 1820, see also page 126, letter 108, dated Dec 29, 1820, and footnote 3

Mary's letter to Mrs Hoppner is less skillful than Shelley's and filled with greater inconsistencies, and protestations, for if she could not convince Byron, and get a retraction from the Hoppners, the Shelleys were likely to have both Claire and Allegra back on their hands

1 Shelley did not state, as Mary has it, that "Elise wrote" to the Hoppners Hoppner's letter to Byron says that Elise "told" the tale when she was serving an English lady in Venice in 1820

2 Mary denies that Claire had ever been Shelley's mistress, that Claire was rude and insulting to her, and says that the union between Shelley and herself "had ever been undisturbed" What is left in the diaries of both Mary and Claire is sufficient to show that on the contrary there were violent scenes and "tremendous fusses", to use Mary's own words, that resulted, as we have seen, in Claire's being twice sent out of the household, to Lynmouth in 1815 and to Florence in 1820

3 Mary must have heard similar stories before, for otherwise how was Foggi's blackmail to be accounted for and Shelley's retort to Del Rosso to silence him?

4 Is it probable that Shelley, so furtive about this trouble, could write so openly and frequently about his "Neapolitan charge" to the Gisbornes and Mary know nothing about it?

5 She says she remembers that Claire did keep her bed for two days but that it was an old illness treated with the same remedies as before in England

Yet Mary wrote Shelley, "Do not think me imprudent in mentioning Claire's illness at Naples It is well to meet facts They are as cunning as wicked" If there was nothing more back of this illness, why was it imprudent for Mary to mention it? Why mention it at all?

If Claire's illness was an old recurrent one and as the diary for Sunday December 27 discloses, "Claire is not well",[37] this date assumes importance or is a remarkable coincidence when we realize that Elena Adelaide's birthday was also on December 27

There is furthermore a discrepancy, not noticed by Professor White, in the birth and death certificates The death certificate says that Elena Adelaide died at the age of fifteen months and twelve days If the death certificate is correct, then the birth certificate is wrong, for if she was born, as the birth certificate states, on December 27, 1818, she would have been not fifteen months and twelve days but seventeen months and fourteen days old, for otherwise her birthday would have been February 26, 1819 The diary for February 26 reads, "Visit the Studii", and on February 28, "Leave Naples at three o'clock—A most tremendous fuss"

Therefore whether we accept the birth certificate or the death certificate

[37] *Shelley and Mary*, pp 351-352

as correct—and it is likely that the birth certificate is correct, since Shelley was present and signed it, and not present when the death certificate was signed, Mary's letter to Mrs Hoppner alleging that all was serene with Mary, Shelley and Claire at this time is another equivocal statement, disproved by the evidence

The natural inference, the more plausible conclusion is that Elena Adelaide was Shelley's child by Claire and that Mary's letter to Mrs Hoppner at Shelley's request was a joint attempt to silence the whole matter for their own as well as for Claire's sake

Their mighty efforts at denial, however, proved unsuccessful Previously, Byron had believed the Hoppner story, glad to have a reason for keeping Allegra out of Claire's hands, for justifying his own conduct toward Claire, and a reason for harshness toward the mother After he had placed Allegra in a convent against Claire's entreaties, he wrote to Hoppner enclosing one of her letters of protest with a note across it reading, "The moral part of the letter upon the Italians, etc, comes well from the writer, now living with a *man* and his *wife,* and having planted a child in the F Foundling" [38]

He must have continued to rib Shelley about it, for in a letter from Shelley to Claire in 1822, we read

> It is of vital importance both to me and to yourself, to Allegra even, that I should put a period to my intimacy with L[ord] B[yron], and that without *eclat* No sentiments of honour or justice restrain him (as I strongly suspect) from the basest insinuations, and the only mode in which I could effectually silence him I am reluctant (even if I had proof) to employ during my father's life But for your immediate feelings I would suddenly and irrevocably leave this country which he inhabits, nor ever enter it but as an enemy to determine our differences *without words* But at all events I shall soon see you, and then we will weigh both your plans and mine Write by next post [39]

Mary's request for a reply from Mrs Hoppner disclaiming belief and accepting the explanation received only stony silence Since Mary's letter was found among Byron's papers after his death, a minor mystery attaches to the problem of whether Byron ever delivered it to the Hoppners To have delivered it would have been to disclose that he had failed in his promise to Hoppner not to report it Into this debate, however, we will not go Shelleyan advocates accuse Byron of treachery in not delivering it, Byron advocates maintain that he did deliver it and that it was returned to him at his request At any rate, as regards any effect upon Mrs Hoppner, it might as well not have been written at all The Shelleys, receiving no answer to calm their anxieties, tried again From a letter Claire wrote to Mary on April 9, 1822,

[38] Grylls, *Claire Clairmont* (p 132)
[39] Ingpen, X, 367

we learn that Claire was receiving visits from Elise at Florence "I wish you would write me back what you wish Elise to say to you, and what she is to say to Madame H I have tried in vain to compose it" This is evidence that Mary had brought Claire into the effort to work out with Elise another concocted letter to convince Mrs Hoppner there was nothing in the story Claire's journal for April 12 has "Call upon Elise—to write the letter to Madame H"

Elise was prevailed upon to write two letters—one to Mary denying having told Mrs Hoppner such tales, another to Mrs Hoppner denying she had seen any such goings-on It seems that Elise's letter to Mrs Hoppner was enclosed in the one Claire sent to Mary in order that Mary might forward it to Mrs Hoppner as documentary proof of the falsity of the story

Even this second effort proved of no avail Mis Hoppner evidently believed with the Countess of Blessington that Mary was "a great liar" She did not accept either Mary's or Elise's denial, for the passage from Crabb Robinson's diary already quoted—(page 19)—reveals that Mrs. Hoppner had regaled him with the same story as late as August 20, 1834

The death of Allegra on April 19, 1822, one week after Elise had written her two letters, put an end to Byron's need of reassurance, and in less than three months the sinking of the *Don Juan* at sea brought Shelley in death far beyond the fears of scandal and blackmail In two years more Byron had been bled to death by his doctors at Missolonghi

Years afterward, since Mrs Hoppner never made a reply, Mary cut her when they met in 1843

The Persistence of the Story in England

This scandal, so alarming to Mary, would have died in Italy had not the English tourists been so assiduous in spreading tales about Byron and Shelley Yet she knew that the Hoppner affair was so widespread that in writing memoirs of Shelley she could not ignore it The methods decided upon and pursued relentlessly, first by Mary and afterwards by Sir Percy and Lady Shelley were first, to omit as far as possible all mention of Claire Clairmont; second, wherever she had to appear to present her in as uncomplimentary light as possible, and third, to falsify the record when the going grew rough Until quite recently, therefore, there has been little if any intimation that Claire played a large part in Shelley's life, or, however troublesome to Mary, that she was a woman in her own right, in several ways more accomplished than the steady detraction of her in the surviving records reveals Miss Grylls' life of Claire, though marred with sentimentalities, has done a good deal to restore the balance Only so much of her, however, has been left in the private diaries as would show her to be the bane of Mary's existence, and Lady Shelley's parting picture of her rolling on the floor in spasms of hysteria at Boscombe leads the reader to conclude that Claire was a variety of feline

compounded under the dragon's tail by Sycorax Professor White is right, however, in charging her with a propensity to quarrel with nearly everyone with whom she associated, and no doubt in later years she was troublesome to the Shelley family

The family succeeded, as we have demonstrated, in stamping upon Shelley biography their versions of Harriet as a wayward woman so that even today the legend is likely to be found in any summary article on Shelley For example, we read in Creasy's *Memoirs of Eminent Etonians* (pp 481-497)

> He [Shelley] and his wife separated by mutual consent His second wife was the daughter of the celebrated Godwin, and in his union with this highly gifted and amiable lady Shelley found the only source of happiness that he ever experienced during his brief but much suffering existence

A similar account can be found in Garnett and Gosse's illustrated *History of English Literature,* and in Garnett's article in the *Dictionary of National Biography* So when Rossetti began to bring out in his memoirs the figure of Claire, Sir Percy at once accused him of sensationalism and recommended that he should model his narrative upon *Shelley Memorials* Then followed from the family archives in rebuttal the derogatory treatments of Claire by Kegan Paul and Mrs Marshall, and when we come to the touchy Hoppner affair, with its "C" for Claire changed to read "E" for Elise in the diary, we observe again the deliberate falsification of the record [40]

When we also reflect upon the reports of Lady Shelley's destruction of unfavorable letters in the case of Harriet, of Trelawny, and of Claire (especially in the Gatteschi incident, Grylls' *Claire Clairmont,* p 208) and observe both her and Mary's ways with the diaries we may legitimately wonder just how much of the truth about Claire and others will ever be recovered when the MS journals themselves and correspondence still reserved are presented for unbiased inspection Professor White states that the only justifiable conclusion from an examination of the letters and journals is that Shelley regarded Claire both as a sister and as a ward, and he finds no "guilt" in them There would have been in any case no sense of "guilt"—an unfortunate word to apply to either Claire or Shelley at this date—for only much later—Shelley never—did Claire turn upon her father-in-law's philosophy and complain of her latitudinarian upbringing We marvel at Professor White's satisfaction in finding in all of Mary's voluminous journals and letters "no shred of direct evidence to show that she ever knew of Elena Adelaide's existence"—but in view of the way Mary treated these primary source materials, how could anyone expect to find a "shred"!

[40] See Mrs Marshall, *op cit*, I-298—Grylls, *Mary Shelley, op cit*, p 148, and White, *op cit*, II, pp 615-16

The Legend of Professor White

When Professor White, not satisfied with Dowden's adroit combination of the Medwin and Hoppner stories (which at least supplied a mother for Shelley's Neapolitan charge), burrowed into the Neapolitan records and unearthed Shelley's Elena Adelaide, he was evidently as embarrassed as Shelley had been over her and over a revelation so disturbing to the prevailing legend of Mary and Shelley At first, he tells us, he accepted the natural inferences—that Elena was Claire's child by Shelley—the more he thought about them, however, the more he wondered whether there was not some alternative explanation which would save Shelley's reputation He, therefore, set to work building the Legend of Professor White to take the place of the Legend of Dowden White remembered Shelley's repeated desire, in the course of his life, to adopt a child What, then, if Elena Adelaide was the carrying out of his long unfulfilled desire, prompted by his anxiety to comfort Mary's distress over the loss of Clara on September 24, 1818? Professor White, therefore, began by removing the hypotheses that the child was Mary's, or that it was Claire's by an unknown father, or Shelley's by an unknown mother. There remained the possibilities that, as Elise and the Hoppners alleged, it was Shelley's and Claire's, or else that it was a child of unknown parents (II pp 71ff) He seized upon the last

In 1818, White continues, after the death of Clara, Shelley was intensely lonely because of a peculiar estrangement from Mary that was never openly admitted and was probably partly pathological on both sides. (A similar explanation, without pathology, is that Claire was around) Shelley in one of his tense emotional strains would have been quite capable of adopting a child without informing Mary at the time Fearing that the Chancery Court might deprive him of his children, especially an adopted child, he registered it as his own by Mary, having taken it from a foundling asylum, and Elise knowing of this made it the basis of her story White makes this contention in spite of the fact that Elise reported that Shelley *put a child in the foundling hospital,* not that he took one out Shelley furthermore picked a date when either Claire or Mary had been ill (in this case Claire) and required a doctor so that he could claim that the child was born at his lodgings Paolo Foggi and Elise put Claire's illness and the adopted child together for purposes of blackmail

Mary, he continues, could not have lived in the house without knowing of the birth of a child to Claire, and she would hardly have lied to Shelley in her answer to the Hoppner charge (Let us, on the contrary, contend that she did know, and in her answer wrote to Shelley, precisely as he wished, a letter of denial he could show to Byron) But to continue· Mary did not explain to Mrs Hoppner about an adopted child Why? Because to do so

would reveal that they had violated the law in signing a false birth certificate that the child was theirs

Let us, then, go back to Professor White's reproduction of the certificates (1) In the birth certificate, Mary's name is spelled "Maria Padurin" and her age is given as "twenty-seven"—though she was only twenty-one She could hardly, then, have been present at the birth registration unless she was prevaricating (2) The baptismal certificate, obtained the same day as the birth certificate, has Mary's name spelled correctly, but as this document is a modern copy of the old certificate, the name may have been corrected by the transcriber (3) The death certificate reveals that both Shelley's and Mary's names are misspelled "Bercy Schelly" and "Maria Gebuin". Neither Shelley nor Mary could have been present at the signing of the death certificate, since both were in Leghorn at the time

There are great difficulties in accepting Professor White's explanations If Shelley could not bring the child into the house, and there is no evidence that such a child was ever in the household, it could not have assuaged Mary's grief over Clara The time of her greatest sorrow would have been at Clara's death in September, not months afterward Furthermore, Mary was not childless, "Wilmouse", as they called their blue-eyed darling, William, was still alive, and the prospect of having other children was not closed, as the birth on November 12, 1819, of Percy Florence witnesses, as well as Mary's subsequent dangerous miscarriage shortly before Shelley's death

But suppose Professor White is correct How can we then explain Shelley's peculiar behavior during Paolo's blackmailing activities and after learning that the Hoppners had spread the story? If Mary gave consent to the adoption before February 27 when the birth was registered, why was she not told of the negotiations with Del Rosso the lawyer in March, 1820? We can only conclude that the negotiations failed at this time or Paolo would not have called at the Shelley home in June, when Mary seems for the first time to have learned of his activities If we maintain that Shelley wanted to spare her, we are confronted by the Hoppner story which he immediately relayed to her in spite of Hoppner's desire she should not be told The elaborate measures Shelley took for concealment show far more than a fear of the Naples law in "falsifying" a birth certificate by swearing that Mary and he were the parents of a child not theirs We are asked by Professor White to believe that Shelley endured blackmail, risked Byron's continued belief in the Hoppner story, Allegra's chance for coming to her mother, the Hoppner's regard for him, and possibilities of further spreading the story—all because Shelley was afraid the Italian law would prosecute him for false swearing over a certificate The subsequent Hoppner correspondence which we have discussed, especially the replies to Mrs Hoppner by Mary, and afterward by Elise with Claire's cooperation, do not furnish any supporting

evidence that all the Shelleys were trying to hide was a "falsified" birth certificate Rather, they were trying to cover up the essential truth at the bottom of Elise and Foggi's activities—Elise having later been induced to write her letters of retraction by more of the money which Mary, in her letter, naively said that Elise "with great professions of love" was asking for

No one apparently "so vile as Elise" should be believed, yet Mary coerced her into marriage with Paolo Foggi, whom she styles "a rascal"—a proceeding hardly in conformity with the enlightened principles of Godwin and the Society of Elective Affinities

We conclude, therefore, that the legend Professor White offers in his generous but mistaken efforts to relieve Shelley of an embarrassment—of which Shelley could not relieve himself—raises more difficulties than it solves, and that it proves to be only the latest and, may we trust, the last attempt to support the Shelley Legend

Such is a re-reading of the Hoppner affair, so fraught with contradictory evidences, which, in view of the gaps in the diaries at this time, the incomplete letters and documents in the case, the lack of further new evidences, cannot be considered as coercive or final The reader will have to make up his own mind as to whether the balance of evidence is not in favor of the simpler explanation rather than in accounts curtailed, names falsified to deceive, and far-fetched hypotheses to explain

5 AFTERMATH OF CLAIRE

Claire continued to live on in Florence with her niece Paola, making visits occasionally to England and elsewhere until she reached the ripe age of 81 Various stories about her appeared—that for a time she was out of her mind and in an asylum, that she engaged in hysterics when she visited Boscombe Manor, that she quarreled intermittently with Jane Williams, Mary, and Lady Shelley She was proud and sensitive over the fact that Mary and her son had rank and wealth while she fared on slender means as tutor and governess, and she remained as temperamental and difficult to associate with as Byron and Shelley and Mary had found her, though her real affection for Mary and her boy, Percy, and for her brother Charles Clairmont is manifest, as well as her convictions as to how and whom the young people should marry She never spoke of her lost child, Allegra, but for Byron she maintained an implacable hatred as the wanton destroyer of her little girl, and she blamed Shelley for not breaking with him and Mary for printing favorable portraits of him in her novels Shelley she referred to as the one she had always loved

Finally her turbulent spirit found before the altar the peace it sought, and for a time she retired to a convent. She evidently believed that her experiences had made her an expert in affairs of the heart, for she intended to publish an answer, evidently to Godwin's free-love philosophy which had proved so disastrous, in the form of a manual of moral instruction for the young and misguided, to be illustrated from the wayward lives of Byron and Shelley With slender praise to the supreme Lord of Life, she thanked God that she could never be young again In harmony with her new faith she believed at last that our only real Home, as she wrote Trelawny, is "beyond the Stars not beneath them Life is only the prologue to an Eternal Drama, as a Cathedral is the vestibule to Heaven" But a picture of her beloved pagan Shelley hung in her room along with a crucifix and when she passed on calmly, without agony or consciousness—as she had predicted she would—she was buried according to her wish with Shelley's little shawl in a Catholic cemetery outside of Florence The final irony in her career appeared on the tombstone, where we read with some astonishment:

> She passed her life in sufferings,
> Expiating not only her faults, but also her virtues.

Lady Shelley's Troubles With Jeaffreson

The family version of Claire as the chief troublemaker in the lives of Mary and Shelley, so plainly set forth by Kegan Paul and Mrs Marshall, suffered a severe setback when Sir Percy and Lady Shelley read John Cordy Jeaffreson's *The Real Lord Byron* in 1883 Their unwise protests created the most formidable antagonist Lady Shelley ever encountered, for Jeaffreson replied with *The Real Shelley* in 1885, one year before Dowden's official life appeared

From the moment *The Real Shelley* came from the press Jeaffreson was greeted with a storm of abuse. Looking back in after years at the uproar he had caused among the Shelley worshippers, he recalled in *A Book of Recollections* the names hurled at him,—a list that can be matched only by those visited upon Ibsen when *Ghosts* appeared in 1891 Jeaffreson was called "a calumniator, a slanderer, a bookmaker, a bumptious bookmaker, a Philistine, a devil's advocate, a toad, a bat, a venomous snake, a poisonous reptile, Thersites, and Caliban" It was Swinburne who labelled him "J Cordy Caliban", and the chief guardian of the Shelley shrine, Dr Richard Garnett, who usually manoeuvered among the Shelleyans on even keel and gently manipulated them all in the interests of the family, burst into the following verse invective.

VAMPYRE OR GHOUL?
or
REAL JEAFFRESON

Man, that on earth wouldst imitate
The ways of spirits foul,
Wilt with the Vampyre link thy fate?
Or cleave unto the Ghoul?

Whether wilt lap the living wave
Through muddy channels sped,
Or get thee down into the grave,
And feast upon the dead?

To roam in sin and scandal's quest
Far as the world is wide—
To gibbet for the public jest
The fault of the fireside—

The honourable to defame—
The fallen to pursue—
To wring the innocent with shame—
Is great and gainful too

Yet with the Vampyre's merry trade
One dire defect consists,
At living men's expense 'tis made,
And men have feet and fists

Not all is framed to bear the brunt
Of battle for free speech
Of brass and iron is the front,
But tender is the breech

More warily the Ghoul selects
For gastronomic ends
That merely Decency protects
And Gratitude befriends

Oh happy hound! from silly sense
Of shamefulness exempt
Secure in dead men's impotence,
And living men's contempt

He revels in the rotting lie
From stench and darkness born,
He spits his slaver in the eye
That cannot look its scorn

The muscles rend, the sinews crack—
But lo! the star of day
And earth to man is given back,
And goblins must away

Something the fiend hath left behind
Steams in the mounting sun,
And scents the sanatory wind
With real Jeaffreson

The chorus of disapproval indicates how successful the labors of Mary and Lady Shelley had become, and how widespread by 1885 was not only the love and appreciation of Shelley but the adoration and worship of the man who fifty years before had been execrated in *The Literary Gazette* as the adulterous and incestuous atheist

The trouble began in Jeaffreson's chapter in *The Real Lord Byron* describing Claire, Mary, and Shelley's relations with Byron Written to counteract Moore's adulation, Jeaffreson's book naturally included an account of Byron and Shelley at Geneva and after The Shelley family had always insisted that Shelley's relationship with Mary was on a higher plane than that of Claire's with Byron Legally it was not, but there could be little other question on such a particular issue because no one could deny Shelley and Mary's love for each other, while it was clear that Claire's lavish expressions of affection for Byron fell from the first upon barren ground and elicited the curt response that her letters were wearisome in length and read like "bad German novels" He bade her "write short"—a virtue possessed by neither Mary nor Claire

The Shelley family resented particularly Jeaffreson's statement, based upon circumstantial evidence, that Mary and Shelley must have known the relationship existing between Claire and Byron when they accompanied her to Geneva—at least Mary must have known about the affair and sympathized and encouraged her As this view put Shelley and Mary in the position of collaborators, J Anthony Froude, a friend of the family, was called upon to take Jeaffreson in hand for writing passages like these·

> What was there in such an affair to rouse shame in the eighteen-year-old Claire, who had been taught to believe that the love which yearned for marriage was the only sanction its marriage needed? Prudence might have determined her to be silent to the world about so innocent a passion, but would not have required her to be silent to her closest female friend, her sister, who was already loving Shelley and living with him, precisely as she was loving and hoping to live with Byron Certainly on all other matters there was the fullest confidence between these young girls of the same home Their mutual affection glowed with the impetuosity of girlish romance Mary had

> in every turn and trial of her love for the one poet enjoyed Claire's sympathy, approval and encouragement Is it to be imagined that the impulsive Claire was less frank about her passion for the other poet? or that Mary – to whom the affair must have been peculiarly acceptable, from its close resemblance to her own affair of the heart – was less liberal of approving words and cordial wishes? Is it conceivable that on this subject alone – the topic which must have made Claire bubble over with sisterly communicativeness – there was a reserve in the mutual confidence that was otherwise so perfect?[1]

Jeaffreson explained that Mary, having knowledge of the affair, would assuredly have told Shelley

> The thing he approved for himself was no thing for Shelley to disapprove in Byron's case The course, which was virtuous for Mary, could not strike him as vicious for Mary's sister[2]

Jeaffreson had no thought of attacking Shelley, whom he at that time admired, he was principally interested in proving from the Morrison papers, to which he had access, that Mrs Stowe's allegations against Byron and her defense of Lady Byron were false, and that Byron's affair with Claire was the cause of Lady Byron's refusal to renew the union. Froude's attack upon him, entitled "A Leaf from the Real Life of Lord Byron",[3] maintained that Shelley and Claire were not on good terms and that Mary and Shelley did not know Claire was expecting to meet Byron at Geneva Full confirmation of Jeaffreson's circumstantial evidence and logical inferences in support of his contrary opinion were not forthcoming until 1939 when John Murray V released to Paston and Quennell some hitherto unpublished letters of Claire to Lord Byron In these we have the documentary proof which Jeaffreson lacked

> Mary is delighted with you, as I knew she would be, she entreats me in private to obtain your address abroad that we may, if possible, have again the pleasure of seeing you She perpetually exclaims "How mild he is! How gentle! How different from what I expected!"[4]

Claire's great mistake, as we have already pointed out, lay in thinking that Byron accepted the Godwinian free-love doctrine that she and Mary so fervently believed in She supposed that Byron would be pleased not only with her but also with Mary and, in strict line with the doctrine, she was

[1] Jeaffreson, *The Real Lord Byron,* II, p 7
[2] *Ibid*, p 8
[3] *The Nineteenth Century,* 1883, pp 228-242
[4] Paston and Quennell, *To Lord Byron,* p 208

prepared to share him with Mary as Shelley had been to share Mary with Hogg

> You will, I suppose, wish to see Mary, who talks and looks at you with admiration You will, I daresay, fall in love with her, she is very handsome and very amiable, and you will no doubt be blessed in your attachment Nothing can afford me such pleasure as to see you happy in any of your attachments If it should be so, I will redouble my attentions to please her I will do everything she tells me whether it be good or bad, for I would not stand low in the affection of the person so beyond blest as to be beloved of you [5]

This passage on communal sharing, which, as we have seen, Mary had already tried out with Hogg, was written in Paris when the Shelleys were well on their way to Geneva, and it is a little difficult to believe they did not know why Claire was traveling thence, nor does any of this correspondence support the contention that Mary and Claire were not on good terms

Froude next insisted that Claire's relations with Byron at Geneva were wholly Platonic, that during the fourteen weeks of the sojourn she could not have been with Byron alone "even for the shortest interval" Jeaffreson's contrary view that the liaison was continued is also substantiated by another letter from the Paston-Quennell volume

> I would have come to you tonight if I thought I could be of any use to you If you want me I am sure Shelley would come and fetch me I am afraid to come, dearest, for fear of meeting anyone Can you pretext the copying? Shelley says he won't look at my note, so don't be offended [6]

On the vexed question of Harriet's infidelity, Jeaffreson accepted, for lack of contrary evidence, the legend of her lapse after Shelley abandoned her Unlike Dowden, who absolved Shelley for her supposed dereliction, Jeaffreson blamed Shelley He gave great offense by departing from the 'Field Place' legend of Mary by stating the view, which Trelawny shared, that her marriage with Shelley was by no means remarkable for happiness—that "they were not a well-mated couple . . " Mary was "as shiftless and helpless a house-keeper as John Westbrook's daughter" He admitted, however, Mary and Shelley's love for each other, and praised Mary for her circumspect life in England after Shelley's death in order to atone for her girlhood mistake—another violation of canon since it could never be acknowledged that the elopement was a *mistake!* He pointed out, finally, that Mary's editorial and biographical work was untrustworthy—a charge that no Shelley researcher has ever denied, though Jeaffreson puts the case too strongly

[5] *Ibid*, p 211
[6] Paston and Quennell, *op cit*, p 213

> Every one of her biographical statements should be read with nervous caution, lively suspicion, and watchful distrust, by those who would avoid error on matters of Shelleyan story All that she said or wrote to the discredit of her step-mother and sister-by-affinity should be read with extreme caution, and large allowance for her animosity against them [7]

He called for a cessation of detractions against Claire If Claire's ideas were corrupt, Shelley was her tutor

> Of one thing there must now be an end in Shelleyan biography – the practice of writing about Claire, as though she were a sort of fallen woman, to whom the Shelleys in their magnanimity showed great kindness, though she had scarcely any claim upon them for protection [8]

These passages, and others like them, do not bear out the Froude-Lady Shelley contentions that the Shelleys were unaware of Claire's relationship with Byron or unsympathetic with it On the contrary, they show that Mary was, like every other woman, fascinated when she came into the noble Lord's presence, and that she anticipated meeting him again in Geneva. There is no change observable in the attitudes of these girls toward love and adventure from those of the year before As Lady Shelley admonished her readers, "remember that they were young" Mary and Claire were still in their teens and nothing if not sentimental and romantic From the point of view of a Hannah More or a Mrs Barbauld, they were young hussies.

Aroused by Froude and piqued at the attack on him by the Shelley family through Froude, Jeaffreson first published a reply, entitled "Something About James Anthony Froude", in his Preface to the Standard Edition of *The Real Lord Byron* He contented himself with drawing up an indictment of 10 bad blunders of fact Froude had made and 81 inaccuracies in the transcript of a single letter "Born to blunder, Mr Froude must go on blundering to the end" He also charged "Of all the inaccurate and foolish books about Shelley, Lady Shelley's book is perhaps the most inaccurate". He then began to investigate the life of Shelley, amassing all the documents and printed matter he could find Beginning, as he says, a believer in Shelley's essential goodness, he was led more and more by his ire at the family legend, and by the lure of his legal acumen and his art of forensics to build up a case for the prosecution As he went on, he grew more and more caustic until he had produced what may be called one of the first "debunking" biographies He allowed his anger at the family apologetics in *Shelley Memorials,* which he stigmatised as "Field Place", to engulf his subject until he had produced a mean and systematic detraction of Shelley both as boy and man

[7] *Ibid*, II, pp 58-59
[8] *Ibid*, II, pp, 364-5

It was unfortunate that Shelley's life should fall into the hands of any pledged attorney for the prosecution bent on proving him to be, in Rossetti's phrase, "a very sorry manikin" Jeaffreson took particular delight in scotching the legend, which Hunt had perpetrated in his violent attack against Hogg, namely, that even in the most trifling matters Shelley was scrupulous about telling the truth As a final blast in the concluding chapter of his second volume he drew up 31 counts to show how much of a liar Shelley really was, especially when he found himself in a tight place, and that he was very far from being the ideal hero of romance that Dr. Garnett had limned in his essay on Shelley and Disraeli. Sir Percy and Lady Shelley's interference, therefore, only created a challenger not only of the vital parts of the Shelley Legend that they had spent so much effort in building but of minute and trifling matters also, and turned to hostility against Shelley a man who had he been let alone "would have been ready to accept trustfully all of Sir Percy's statements in favor of his father and mother, and all his statements—even his worst statements—to Harriett's discredit." So Jeaffreson averred

He proved easily the falsity of the Hunt legend (upon which the family had been most insistent) that Shelley and Harriet had separated by mutual consent at the end of two years He reiterated Peacock's point that Shelley remarried Harriet as late as March 24, 1814, and eloped with Mary on July 28, he as easily rebutted Froude's charge against him of "making public the scandalous Hoppner story which otherwise would have been forgotten," by pointing out that *Shelley and Mary,* issued privately by Lady Shelley in 1882, had carried the story, from her own family archives, and that the *Edinburgh Review* in October of that year had given it such publicity that it was the talk of every London dinner table and ran like wild fire through the United States when the New York *Home Journal* had reprinted it in December under the title "New Facts about Shelley" He charged that Froude in attacking him had been used as a tool in a discreditable business He then went on to point out numerous other "inaccuracies of dates, transcriptions, base presumptions, false inferences, and wild unreason" Because he was usually right in matters of fact, within the area of his available sources, he was a bad man to tangle with After Rossetti had read Jeaffreson's book, he wrote to H Buxton Forman "What a firecracker Jeaffreson has let off at Shelley's tail!" While most reviewers contented themselves with pouring abuse on Jeaffreson, Rossetti wrote an exceedingly temperate and fair-minded review for two numbers of the *Athenaeum,* paying due respect to many corrections of fact and interpretation which Jeaffreson had made to set the record straight, while deploring the derogatory tone of his attack on the character of the poet.

Jeaffreson wrote not only with hostility toward Lady Shelley and Froude but with firm prejudices against two other groups· The Shelleyan Enthusiasts and The Shelleyan Socialists The former, led by H Buxton Forman and

Richard Garnett, made up the vehement admirers of Shelley's poetry "who, without ever thinking of his social views, delighted in imagining that Shelley's character and career resembled his genius in its grandeur, and his song in its loftiness and beauty" The latter were made up of such men as Henry Salt, Bernard Shaw and other radicals stemming from the aftermath of Charles Bradlaugh's atheism and Robert Owen's communistic experiments—groups who valued Shelley's "mischievous social philosophy" and thought of Marriage "somewhat as the pious John Milton thought of it in the seventeenth century"—and believed it should be replaced with the Free Contract

Jeaffreson attacked the Shelley lineage as not of aristocratic descent from the Penshurst Sidneys—the baronetcy not being ancient but founded after Shelley's birth by a self-made man who procured his wealth by marrying two rich heiresses—the grandfather being the younger son of a Yankee apothecary from Newark, New Jersey He set straight critics who threw all the blame for Shelley's divagations upon his family, and the administrators of Eton and Oxford, and upon Lord Eldon's decision of the Chancery Suit, which Lady Shelley had characterized as "monstrous injustice" This is the line of defense also pursued by moderns like Mrs Olwen W Campbell in her *Shelley and the Unromantics,* 1924 Never Shelley, but the environment was to blame—"an admirable evasion of whoremaster man to lay his goatish disposition to a star." The Shelley Legend accused the Chancellor of persecution, of having rendered his decision because he disagreed with Shelley's opinions on Marriage, whereas, the Chancellor had taken great pains to point out that it was not the *opinions* in *Queen Mab* but Shelley's continuing to hold them and putting them into practice in abandoning Harriet and her children and forming a Free Contract with Mary (resulting in another set of children) that brought the Chancellor to his decision

Believing, when H Buxton Forman declared "Shelley in other circumstances might have been the Saviour of the World," "that Shelleyan enthusiasm had gone quite far enough", Jeaffreson set out to demolish the fictitious Shelley in order to counteract the pernicious social philosophy which, in his view, for more than a quarter of a century had been sapping "sound-hearted England" As a lawyer, he could but look askance at Shelley's wholesale contempt for property rights and the institutions of Church and Family

In the course of taking the Shelley worshippers to task he flayed Lady Shelley's *Memorials* as a work "from first to last a book of mistakes—wrong in every page; wrong in its views of the poet's character, wrong in its general outline of his career, wrong in its incidents, wrong in its names and dates, wrong, even in its particulars of domestic affairs, legal matters and primary arrangements . . " and he doubted whether any biography issuing from such a source could be reliable The greatest discomfiture Jeaffreson

gave to the Shelleyans was that on almost all major issues, he was right, within the confines of the limited source materials available to him

Jeaffreson's attitude toward Shelley at Eton is that of a disapproving schoolmaster discovering a naughty boy who should be birched, and at Oxford, of an offended don who thinks the young scapegrace should be expelled His account is full of petty and prolonged nagging over trifles which, even when he is right, leave the reader bored and impatient. All of Shelley's delightful mischief is frowned down upon and his incorrigibilities reproved because he was not a Little Lord Fauntleroy Obviously, had Shelley been Little Lord Fauntleroy he would not have been Shelley, and his genius can hardly be gauged by legalistic quiddities and forensic punctillios Shelley was nothing if not a romantic enthusiast—an ethereal being borne on the West Wind, incapable of being held within the confines of a legal brief From the point of view of Anglo-Saxon common sense he was, as Professor William P Trent argued, not quite sane, and no doubt, as Professor Trent recommends, had he followed Burke rather than Godwin and accepted Paley, Shelley would have been different but not the Shelley of *Queen Mab* [9]

Jeaffreson made hash of Garnett's statement, in "Shelley and Pall Mall," that Shelley had only a slight acquaintance with Harriet previous to marrying her, that he married her because his chivalry of sentiment was taken advantage of (I, p 258) He made ridiculous Lady Shelley's attempts to palliate by false assertions Shelley's publication of *The Necessity of Atheism* and Garnett's contradictory apology later that Shelley intended it only as a playful "squib"

Jeaffreson maintained in after years that he had deliberately published his book before Dowden's to prevent the family biographer from writing, under the influence of Sir Percy and Lady Shelley, an account far from the facts, and he alleged, "that Dr Dowden was fortunate in coming without my assistance to several of my most important conclusions"

Dowden, with the immense advantage of access to the family archives at Boscombe, which neither Rossetti nor Jeaffreson had been privileged to see, reviewed *The Real Shelley* in *The Academy* for June 6th of 1885

To his own satisfaction and that of Dr Garnett, he was able to point out thirty minor errors which Jeaffreson, without the family source material, could hardly help making, but without discussing or disproving Jeaffreson's major contentions. He flatly stated that a letter was in existence "proving beyond question that Shelley and Mary travelled to Geneva with Claire in 1816 in complete ignorance of Claire's relations with Byron" If Dowden had been handed Claire's correspondence, quoted above, he would have had to retract his statement He wisely avoided making his two-volume biog-

[9] *The Authority of Criticism and Other Essays* "Apropos of Shelley" Scribners, 1899

raphy in any way a refutation of Jeaffreson's book He did the more effective thing of not mentioning it at all or his indebtedness in any way to it, but counteracted Jeaffreson's acrid and noisome squirt gun at the Shelley shrine with a stream of unction and incense The cult of Shelley, however, had become so widespread among the literati that Dowden's book and the hostile reviews discredited Jeaffreson's effort Thenceforth he became generally regarded as the polecat among Shelley biographers, to be cursed when he was not ignored

It seems likely that Jeaffreson in publishing his book before Dowden's made a tactical mistake Had he waited to see what Dowden would have published without the Jeaffreson check-rein upon him, he might have had the opportunity to write a more effective counterblast to Dowden's perfumed performance This task was fortunately left for Mark Twain in his essay *In Defense of Harriet Shelley* He called Dowden's life of Shelley "a literary cakewalk"—much to the distress of Garnett, who endeavored to comfort Dowden's sufferings under Mark Twain's gibes by calling the essay "an astounding piece of impertinence" Jeaffreson's book was, as Rossetti observed, an unpleasant but "a close and tough piece of argument", "incontestably a solid array of facts and disquisitions and a forcible indictment of Shelley as a man" . . . "But whether its able author need in the long run felicitate himself on tarring and feathering a supreme poet and an idealistic reformer, in a world where such personages are the reverse of plentiful, is a separate question, and we answer it in the negative"[10]

Lady Shelley and Edward Dowden

Edward Dowden first greeted the prospect of writing the official life of Shelley with enthusiasm (in 1883) but he soon found it an exceedingly irksome and formidable assignment, and far from the labor of love that his biography of Southey for the English Men of Letters series had been Had the Shelley family chosen Rossetti, they would have given to the world a much more impartial and satisfactory biography But this was not Sir Percy and Lady Shelley's intention During the twenty-five years when they had quarreled with, taken exception to, or protested against every friend of Shelley's who had ventured to record the Shelley he had known, Sir Percy and Lady Shelley had come to cherish very definite opinions about Shelley, which were by no means based upon fact, but which, because they wished to believe them, had become fact to them The official biographer was expected to give this official interpretation, and if he strayed, he was to be guided by Dr Garnett along the right path.

[10] *The Athenaeum,* May 30, 1885, 687ff June 6, 1885, 720ff

Edward Dowden was chosen to prepare the official life based upon the family archives, because Dr. Garnett, who had championed the Shelley Legend against Peacock and all others and whom the family would have chosen to write the biography, was too much engrossed with his work at the British Museum Dowden's task, begun in 1883, shortly after the Shelleys had privately printed and then suppressed their version of the journals of *Shelley and Mary,* was the three-year toiling of a conscientious but baffled and troubled spirit Had he been given free access to all the manuscripts, letters, and other sources in the Shelley family's possession and let alone to write according to his own judgment, his biography might not have received the slating it so justly merited from Matthew Arnold and Mark Twain

It is doubtful, however, whether temperamentally Dowden was the man to write an acceptable biography of Shelley because he was prepossessed—like Emerson and Browning—with the "moral sentiment" He had found Southey congenial because of his "good home virtues and steadfastness" Though he was able to appreciate Shelley's great poetic gifts, he could view his conduct only with an uneasy conscience which, combined with the promptings of Sir Percy and Lady Shelley, caused him to indulge in constant apology, wire-drawn explanation, and perfumed and labored circumlocution The Shelley family did not wish Shelley, his second wife Mary, or William Godwin to receive any adverse judgment, and any of the glaring departures from Victorian standards they wished suppressed, toned down, explained away, glossed over, or apologized for There developed, then, as would be expected, a very definite conflict Dowden, on the one hand, doing his best to extract from the family the facts contained in letters and journals and to maintain an independence of judgment, and Lady Shelley as strenuously resisting in giving him access to basic materials, except now and then piecemeal In other words, she expected Dowden to do the impossible He was, furthermore, obliged to use the printed version of *Shelley and Mary,* only for a brief moment did he once have the precious original diaries in his hands, and then he found, to his great discomfiture, that the printed version was a bowdlerized account differing throughout from the manuscript text

His first task should have been to insist on the use of the manuscript text of the journals, but since Lady Shelley had already prepared her own printed version of them, Dowden was compelled to make his notes and annotations in that Not until someone has collated and corrected Lady Shelley's *Shelley and Mary* with the original manuscript journals will Shelley biography be on a sound basis Dowden's account, therefore, was bound to reflect what Lady Shelley wished the official life to reflect She was, too, very chary about letting him use the contents of her archives In a letter to Garnett in 1885, after he had gathered materials far and wide for two years, he complained that the family had shown him very little

> Another great difficulty he surmounted H Buxton Forman was friendly and courteous, but says he cannot open his treasures to me [11]

But by agreeing to give H Buxton Forman twenty per cent of his profits he was allowed access to Forman's vast collection, an indispensable adjunct, since, among a wealth of other valuable materials, Forman had the Trelawny to Claire correspondence and Claire's letters and journals

It is reported that more than once, because of family interference, Dowden was tempted to abandon the whole project

> They are very kind at Boscombe, but I feel oppressed by the duty of considering all Lady Shelley's tender enthusiasms [12]

He apparently wrote along freely enough until he came to the chapters which dealt with the separation of Shelley from Harriet, then he met from Sir Percy and Lady Shelley the same sort of difficulties that Hogg and Peacock had endured

In a letter to Garnett dated May 15, 1885, Dowden writes he has followed Garnett's views, but he added

> no charge of grave misconduct against Harriet before the separation has ever been brought except by an unknown person communicating with Godwin after her death [13]

He wished to clear Harriet of imaginary accusations and to do her justice, for he found "people here and there thinking there must be good evidence that she sinned grievously" He added that he was prepared to modify his views if Sir Percy and Lady Shelley could "indicate facts or interpret known facts in a way which shall show things in a different light" He was distressed when they made known their disapproval of his account as much too favorable to Harriet, and they appealed to Dr Garnett as mediator and referee.

When Dowden was called to Boscombe, therefore, he encountered a barrage from Lady Shelley against Harriet Lady Shelley, he wrote Garnett, had "filled up all the gaps with conjectures which time seemed to have altered into something like certainties—'Harriet was weakly during pregnancy—Eliza pressed her to drink wine etc etc —Shelley never loved Harriet etc'" He pointed out to Garnett that he could not include such charges without evidence, nor was he convinced at this time of infidelity on Harriet's part He complained that the family had shown him "unhappily very

[11] Dowden, Edward *Letters of Edward Dowden and his Correspondents* London, Dent, 1914 Page 201

[12] Dowden, Edward *Fragments from Old Letters, E D to E D W* London, Dent, 1914 Page 179 The letter is dated April 4, 1886

[13] *Letters About Shelley,* edited by R S Garnett London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1917 Page 113

little," three or four short letters of Shelley to his father, another to Charles Grove, and the letter of Harriet to Hookham

Garnett, though of the opinion that Harriet was a foolish woman, did not believe that Harriet's character should be assailed And yet he admits writing as "an advocate for Shelley" against Peacock's defense of Harriet in 1862, when he was the first to use the passage from the December 16, 1816 letter, in which Shelley justifies himself "Hookham, Longdill, every one, does me full justice"

Lady Shelley knew, after she and Sir Percy had purchased the eleven letters of Shelley to Harriet, that they were Major Byron forgeries This was the evidence against Harriet that they kept stating was in the hands of the Shelley family but which, out of respect for the Esdailes, could not be revealed

By the last days of December, 1885, when Dowden had revised his manuscript so that it had received the approval of the Shelleys, we observe that, under the influence of the letter of December 16, 1816, and that of January 11, 1817, Dowden's views of Harriet had materially changed He accepted the prostitution story and quoted from the December 16 letter (with some omissions) as evidence, he put forward Mary's Major Ryan story, not as ascertained fact but as what Shelley had come to believe

The net result was the unfavorable view of Harriet in Dowden's biography which drew down the condemnation of the critics What a superb further defense of Harriet Mark Twain and other critics could have made had he or they known that these charges were based upon questionable papers and forged letters! It is impossible to believe that either Edward Dowden or Dr Garnett, the arbiter, ever realized that these letters were falsifications The reasons why Lady Shelley kept these letters under her personal surveillance for over twenty years, making veiled allusions to them and revealing only portions of their contents as late as 1883-1886, are obvious Had they possessed no suspicion of falsity, she would not have hesitated to display them "Until the documents have been made accessible in their entirety to independent critics", as one reviewer of Dowden's book pointed out, there were no means either for checking their authenticity or for verifying the conclusions drawn by Dowden from them

It is not necessary to repeat the charges of partisanship that Matthew Arnold and Mark Twain levied so successfully against Dowden's official family biography As a biography it is by no means as impartial or as judicious as those of Rossetti or of Symonds, nor, as Dr. Julia Power avers, is it "the best biography of the poet thus far produced" The two best short biographies remain those of Rossetti and John Addington Symonds, and as has already been stated, the anecdote biography by Stoddard gives a far more faithful picture of Shelley as he walked and lived on earth than the unctuous special pleadings of Dowden for his "ineffectual angel".

It will already have become apparent that Professor White's recent reduction of his two-volume work to one volume, entitled *Portrait of Shelley*, does not fill the need for either a candid or a reliable modern biography that discriminates between fact and fiction He has made no thoroughgoing tests among his sources to sift out what is based upon forgery, fabrication, and family pleading In his account of Shelley's relations with Mary, Claire, and other women, he continues the false methods for which he criticizes Dowden Because he is protective, apologetic, and sentimental, he presents a confused and contradictory portrait of Shelley that the poet's friends, Byron, Peacock, Hogg, and Trelawny, Claire, Mrs Gisborne, and Jane Williams, would never have recognized

Symonds and Other Recalcitrants

Long had Symonds waited for Dowden's biography to appear in order to observe whether at last the proofs to which the family had so long been alluding did, when disclosed, absolve Shelley In a careful review of Dowden's treatment entitled "Shelley's Separation from His First Wife", Symonds tersely sums up the case against Harriet as unproved

> If now we turn to contemporary records between the dates, June, 1814, and May, 1815 (at which time Harriet disappears from our ken), we find no intimation either in Mary's or Miss Clairmont's diary, or in Shelley's words and writings, or in the conduct of the Shelley-Godwin set, that Harriet was believed to have broken faith so early with her husband When Shelley in the summer of 1814 sought to lower her in the eyes of Mary Godwin, he did so by hinting that she only cared for his money and his prospects Mary talks about her "insulting selfishness," calls her "nasty woman," and exhibits a good deal of resentment at Shelley's welcome to his son and heir by her (December 6, 1815) The pained reiteration of the words *wife* in her diary on this occasion proves how bitterly she felt her own position as *mistress* Shelley invited Harriet to establish herself in the neighbourhood of Mary and himself She was visited in London by the whole party But while they continued upon awkward terms of half familiarity and mutual irritation, nothing by word or act implied a knowledge of her previous infidelity
>
> In conclusion, I am bound to express my opinion that nothing now produced from the Shelley archives very materially alters the view of the case at which sane and cautious critics arrived before these were placed in the hands of his last biographer
>
> In his own case he [Shelley] felt that Harriet's emotion towards him had changed, while an irresistible passion for another woman had suddenly sprung up in his heart Upon these

> grounds, after undergoing a terrible contention of the soul, he forced on the separation to which his first wife unwillingly submitted [14]

Symonds' summary is, in essence, that which Garnett had vainly tried to refute in his attacks on Peacock It is significant that neither Lady Shelley, nor Garnett, nor Dowden was able to make this apocryphal story of Harriet prevail

As the chorus of Shelley praise rose higher and higher in the 1870's and 1880's, it bid fair to drown out the voices of certain dissenters who, since the '50's, had disapproved of Shelley's morals or been repelled by the fulsome eulogies, or had indulged in ironic comments on phases of the legend growing in their midst Jeaffreson was not alone in dissent

Charles Kingsley, the muscular Christian, had become an early dissenter in *Fraser's Magazine* for November, 1853 He gave Shelley a prolonged condemnation He found less of moral law in Shelley than in any other known writer who ever meddled with moral questions, his whole life having been a substitution of internal sentiment for moral law Shelley was, according to Kingsley, "a sentimentalist pure and simple, incapable of anything like inductive reasoning, a nature utterly womanish " etc , his unfulfilled prophecies of perfection "only increasing the unrest and unhealth of sensitive young men."

Principal J C Shairp, who succeeded Matthew Arnold as Professor of Poetry at Oxford, became alarmed at the spread of Shelley's "poisonous" morality among the students They had suddenly discovered a kindred adolescent soul in the rapturous languors of Shelley's lyric Arcadianizing, in his wild paganism, and in his defiance of authority—especially of the Oxford dons Against rationalists like Lecky and Leslie Stephen, who were adding fuel to the Shelleyan fire by emphasizing the relativity of morals, Principal Shairp uttered the stern warning that Shelley's defiance of morality was not a matter of local and provincial concern but universal in its pernicious tendency To him, Shelley was a wicked soul masquerading in beautiful lyrics "Beautiful though they be, they are like those fine pearls which, we are told, are the products of disease in the parent shell All Shelley's poetry is, as it were, a gale blown from a richly gifted but unwholesome land and the taint, though not so perceptible in the lyrics, still hangs more or less over many of the finest "[15]

The Honorable Roden Noel in 1886 asserted, before Dowden's biography appeared, that to condone Shelley's treatment of Harriet was to condone the worst kind of aristocratic arrogance—the intolerant arrogance of intellectual

[14] Symonds, John Addington "Shelley's Separation from His First Wife" *Fortnightly Review*, 1887, pages 613-615

[15] *Fraser's Magazine*, new series 20 38-53, 1879

superiority He says "Let us reverence and pardon our dear poet, but not call his follies and human lapses supreme wisdom and virtue because they are his"[16]

The most famous protest of all came, in 1888, from the pen of Matthew Arnold, who found the palavering of Dowden offensive, and brought him and the Shelley worshippers suddenly to earth Two sentences from this well-known essay will serve to show how effectively Arnold destroyed the picture of Shelley that Lady Shelley and Dr Garnett had so carefully constructed and defended against all opponents for thirty years

> . when the passion of love was aroused in Shelley (and it was aroused easily) one could not be sure of him, his friends could not trust him We have seen him with the Boinville family With Emilia Viviani he is the same If he is left much alone with Miss Clairmont, he evidently makes Mary uneasy, nay, he makes Professor Dowden himself uneasy And I conclude that an entirely human inflammability, joined to an inhuman want of humour and a superhuman power of self-deception, are the causes which chiefly explain Shelley's abandonment of Harriet in the first place, and then his behaviour to her and his defence of himself afterwards [17]

Nothing, however, will ever erase Matthew Arnold's famous blunder, at the close of his brilliant review of Dowden, that Shelley in his poetry as well as in his life "is a beautiful *and ineffectual* angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain" This was not exactly the angel that Mary and Lady Shelley had endeavored so hard to create and to perpetuate, but Lady Shelley still had in her armory, ready for release, another band of Shelley enthusiasts—The Shelley Society

[16] Noel, Roden *Essays on Poetry and Poets,* pages 130-131
[17] Arnold, Matthew "Shelley" In *Essays in Criticism, Second Series* London Macmillan, 1895, pp 243-244

PART V

OTHER PHASES OF THE SHELLEY LEGEND

"Nowadays all things appear in print sooner or later ."

MATTHEW ARNOLD, *Shelley.*

1. THE SHELLEY SOCIETY (1886)

If Jeaffreson thought he could stem the tide of Shelley idolatry, he reckoned without his arch enemies Sir Percy and Lady Shelley, for they were ready in the next year to overwhelm him with Dowden's biography and the founding of the Shelley Society We do not know on what authority Dr Julia Power maintains[1] that Lady Shelley was instrumental in the founding of the Society, but a close friend of the family, Stopford A Brooke, gave the opening address and said all the proper things in eulogy, and Richard Garnett presided at the second meeting

The inauguration of this worthy association took place on March 10, 1886, with an attendance of five hundred enthusiasts On the platform were Messrs H Buxton Forman, Thomas J Wise, John Todhunter, Henry Arthur Jones, H S Salt and others Dr Furnivall, who was the prime mover in the founding of literary societies, had exclaimed when a Shelley Society was suggested to him "By Jove! I will. He was my father's friend"—a noble sentiment that Lang, with aid from Gosse, who was retaliating because Furnivall in his opening remarks had coupled Gosse's poetry with Tupper's, used as the refrain for the following amusing take-off in verse.

"By Jove, I will he was my father's friend!"
Thus Dr Furnivall, in choice blank verse,
Replied when he was asked by Mr Sweet
(Sweet of the pointed and envenomed pen,
Wherewith he pricks the men who not elect
Him a Professor, as he ought to be),
'Twas thus, we say, that Furnivall replied
To the bold question asked by bitter Sweet

[1] Power, Julia *Shelley in America in the Nineteenth Century* University Studies Published by the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska Vol XL, No 2, 1940 Page 155

"And what that question?" Briefly, it was this–
"Why do not you, who start so many things,
"Societies for poets live and dead,
"Why do not you a new communion found–
" 'Shelley Society' might be the name –
"Where men might worry over Shelley's bones?"
"By Jove, I will, he was my father's friend,"
Said Furnivall, and lo, the thing was done!
Then the fresh victim to "inaugurate,"
They called upon the Reverend Stopford Brooke
Who, being well disposed to them, arose,
And did address them in majestic phrase,
"Forewords," as they are styled by Furnivall,
By Jove, for Shelley was his father's friend
"A thoughtful and most temperate address"
Was Stopford Brooke's, who, as we learn with grief
From the reporter of this merry fit,
"Knocked Mr Matthew Arnold out of time "

Oh, somewhere, meek unconscious Matt,
That sit'st beneath Teutonic limes,
Somewhere thou'lt read i' the *Times*,
How Stopford Brooke has knocked thee flat!

Then, to the joy of the assembled host,
To them arose intrepid Furnivall
(Young Mr Shelley was his father's friend),
And proved that Matthew is a Philistine!
Oh, tell it not in Gath, oh, tell it not
Where men do congregate in Ascalon,
That Mr Arnold tarries in their tents,
Disguised, and worships Dagon e'en as they
Such is the view of Dr Furnivall

Then anecdotes of Shelley were brought forth–
Old anecdotes, and such as Captain Sumph
Was wont to tell of Byron and the Priest,
Who grieved that he was "not a family man "
This was the bravest of the anecdotes,
How Shelley at the elder Furnivall's
(For Shelley was the Doctor's father's friend)
Was asked one day, at tea, "What he would take?"
And what took Shelley but a dish of milk
(It seems he did not like it in a cup) –
A dish of milk, and, butterless, a crust
Such was the food of this superior mind,
Such the tradition and the influence
That shaped the soul of Dr Furnivall

What more? Why not so much as we might hope,
But Mr Brooke – the Reverend Stopford Brooke,
He who in our religion finds romance –
Declared that Shelley was the poet-priest
Of what he calls "the modern Meliorism"
What that may be we know not, but 'tis thought
To be a kind of pious Socialism,
To be a dallying with dynamite,
With Mr Hyndman and the other gents
Who lead a mob along the streets and break
The windows, and who scare the little girls
Then these weird figures went their several ways,
All the Society of Shelleyites
Much have they added to the public stock
Of information about Shelley's ways,
Much, very much, it helps us to enjoy
The *Adonais* and *Alastor,* too,
Prometheus and *Epipsychidion*
Oh, happy Shelley! happy in thy friends,
And happy in the culminating chance
When Mr Sweet inquired of Furnivall
Why he should so neglect so great a bard,
For Shelley was the Doctor's father's friend"[2]

It seems that the father of Furnivall had attended Mary at the delivery of one of her babes while Shelley was in the other room with some friends fervently arguing the justifiability of suicide The doctor, overhearing, presented them with his dissecting knives as a ready means to put their arguments into practice, but no one responded So it was fitting that Dr Furnivall's son should preside as chairman of this auspicious gathering

The first thing, of course, was to batter down the heretics Stopford Brooke took care of this in his inaugural address by "knocking Matthew Arnold flat" and Furnivall dragged out the *corpus delicti* with references to "Philistines" Brooke, after some preposterous assertions, such as that Shelley's impressions of nature were invariably true (whereas, on the contrary, Shelley made up his very unnatural forests as he went along), skated over thin ice on Shelley as a love poet by saying that what Shelley wrote on the subject could not be "called serious," and capped the climax, after praising Shelley's passion for universal justice, by stressing "the religious gravity" of his teaching, his method being "the method of Jesus Christ". One wonders what either Harriet or Elizabeth Hitchener would have had to say on this point—the one in Shelley's felicitous phrase "a noble animal", but with no philosophic bent, the other "a *Brown Demon*" and "an hermaphroditical beast of a woman",

[2] *Notebook of the Shelley Society* Part I, 1888 Pages 33-34 For further details, see Ratchford, *op cit*, pp 565-6

"of cool and undeviating revenge", or what Byron would have replied to this sententious verdict could he have heard it and also Shelley's blast against him "By God! He's no better than a Christian"

For neophytes who needed to be led gently by the hand into Shelley's social views, H S Salt announced *A Shelley Primer.* Recalcitrant celebrities, however, had to be corralled by invitation Even if they could not be persuaded to join the Society, they could at least be said to have attended once Four recalcitrants were Tennyson, Browning, Lowell, and Matthew Arnold Tennyson had shown his displeasure with a shrug of his shoulders at even a Wordsworth Society when he remarked "They will give one a disgust—Why can't people be quiet? Ugh!" Browning, having once adored Shelley when he met some one who had seen "Shelley plain" (something the Italian circle were favored with in shocked astonishment when Shelley walked from the beach into the living-room without a stitch of clothing), would have nothing more to do with Shelley the man after reading Hookham's letters between Shelley and Harriet, and on this account refused to join Lowell had been guilty in 1857 of comparing Shelley's Platonic love principles to those of the Mormons Tennyson declined, offering the death of his son as an excuse Matthew Arnold was "unfortunately unable to be present"

The gathering turned out to be a conglomerate of rather ill-sorted devotees of special Shelley interests H Buxton Forman and Thomas J Wise were looking for customers for their privately printed limited reprints of rare Shelley items which they were ready to turn out at high prices At the second meeting Dr Garnett and J A Froude represented Lady Shelley's coterie of Victorian admirers Henry Arthur Jones and Alma Murray, however, were interested in staging that doubtful drama *The Cenci,* while H. S. Salt and Bernard Shaw were interested, on the contrary, in demonstrating that *The Cenci* was old-fashioned melodramatic stuff echoing Shakespeare—"Shelley at his worst"—and that *Queen Mab* should receive attention as "an original poem on a great subject because it anticipated sociological problems being slowly worked out independently of the conscious interference of man"

The name of J Cordy Jeaffreson, a much more dangerous antagonist than Matthew Arnold, was mentioned once After some chortling over his privately circulated poem attacking Jeaffreson, Garnett agreed with Dowden that silence was the most effective rejoinder—and they were quite right in their decision Jeaffreson was snowed under by a few hostile reviews and the Shelley Society Gosse disliked the pontifical Furnivall, who had made slighting references to his poetry Garnett and Dowden refused membership because they feared meeting Jeaffreson. Rossetti lived to regret he had ever joined

Furnivall was, however, quite canny He dared say that the Society should endeavor to find out whether the "real Shelley was the being painted in black by Mr J Cordy Jeaffreson or the man limned so ably in glowing

colours by Mr Stopford Brooke" He also added the admirable suggestion that the Society was not meant to last forever—and predicted ten years as a likely duration He was too optimistic, for the Society's enthusiasm waned rapidly before and after the centenary in 1892, in spite of frantic and frequent appeals of the Honorable Secretary, Mr T J Wise, for support

The first proposal for reprinting articles on Shelley to give them more accessible form was to issue Froude's article of 1883 attacking Jeaffreson and clearing "Shelley's fair fame" "by conclusive proof" This suggestion came from the pen of F S Ellis, who nevertheless thought Froude should make a revision of his interpretation on one point based on Froude's quotation from the *Shelley and Mary* diary, namely Claire's statement about "the sublime community of women" Ellis feared that "the loathesome picture" might be drawn of Shelley and the woman he regarded as his wife discussing with a girl of sixteen the unsavoury subject of promiscuous sexual intercourse between men and women—and that this would reveal "Shelley as a man of depraved and debased mind" What Claire really had in mind, contended Ellis, was a group of women without men, like the picture the noble Laureate had drawn in *The Princess!* Claire's idea, it may be said, was slightly different, like Mary Wollstonecraft she was calling for a community of noble minds, male and female, a Pantisocracy

At the second meeting H Buxton Forman, fearful of the radicals as well as conservatives in the group, gave a qualified defence of *Queen Mab,* explained it as revolutionary for good in its day, but not calculated to do good either personal or social now, it should be relegated to Shelley's juvenilia—a point of view that aroused the socialists in the society who were revering *Queen Mab* as the bible of the new order Garnett smoothed the waters by likening *Queen Mab* to an American writer's recent essay on "Scientific Theism" [by John Fiske] The Rev W A Harrison was bolder and proclaimed that Shelley in *Queen Mab* fought a bogus Christianity.

The Performance of The Cenci

For the performance of *The Cenci* the stalls and boxes were to be entirely filled by the guests of the Society—the critics, the committee and the members being assigned to the dress circle, balcony, and pit stalls, while at the request of Alma Murray, who took the role of Beatrice, the gallery was allotted "entirely to the poorer members of that lady's profession"—and by the kindness of Henry Arthur Jones they received copies of the text gratis

The Society knew only too well that it was playing with dynamite in staging "an incestuous theme", and *The Cenci* could not have been staged at all for the general public One periodical showed fire by answering the Society's plea for freedom in art "We never shriek so loudly about art or

support it so diligently as when we know there is a doubt about the morality of what we are going to see"

The editor of the *New Era* wickedly said in his leading article that an Incestuous Drama was to be given at the Grand Theatre on May 7, and wondered how the Lord Chamberlain was prevailed upon to allow *The Cenci* to be played in a licensed theatre—and the public accordingly deluged the secretary of the Society with requests for tickets The secretary had to remonstrate with the *New Era* that the performance was strictly a private affair and not, as the *New Era* had said, "a quasi-private one" The *Court and Society Review* became irreverent when "the Shelley-cum-Furnivall Society was inaugurated in March The Hare succeeded to that month and the Hatter and Alice were all there at the tea table in University College The usual gathering of frenzied youths and tousled maidens was present as it will be on Wednesday of this week"

Dr Furnivall, in order to guarantee that the members would be properly nourished after the shock of *The Cenci,* gave a *Cenci dinner,* price four shillings

The performance came off with shoutings and handkerchief wavings, Alma Murray having acquitted herself with glory Browning, Lowell, Meredith, and Lang, another uncertain Shelleyite, *were* present—also Sir Percy and Lady Shelley, who "expressed their warm appreciation of the performance"

The press was less enthusiastic The *Times* said that the performance was "of doubtful service to their idol's memory" and "had demolished its pretensions as a play" The *Daily Telegraph* praised Mr Vegin's Count Cenci and Alma Murray's Beatrice, but thought the four long hours of a lovely May afternoon could have been better employed The *Morning Post* praised Alma Murray but said Vegin's performance was only splendid declamation, and also complained of "four wretched hours" The *Scotsman* said nothing could hide the intrinsic foulness of the story, and the Liverpool *Courier,* that the Society had effectually shattered one of the illusions regarding the Shelley idol The *Western Daily Mercury* thought it was delightful to see Browning, on his seventy-fourth birthday, and Mr Lowell side by side in the stalls and taking the liveliest interest in the performance The general consensus seemed to be that the play "better be left on the library shelf" and the hope was expressed that it would "ever remain a forbidden play"

Browning, however, wrote Alma Murray that "after such a display of passion and pathos, what is impossible for you—the Poetic Actress without a rival in that most difficult of all conceivable characters to personate"

We have as always the glaring contrast of one who found "the play so utterly obscene as hardly to bear telling", and the *Church Reformer* saying "a man must indeed have an imagination 'foul as Vulcan's smithy' to call a play so pure, so terrible, 'improper'," even though a court official had termed

it "a display of the wrinkled vice and rank malignity spawned from the opulent slime of Italy"

At Oxford, however, the officials were unforgiving and adamant against the Oxford Union's spending a guinea on a subscription to the Shelley Society Lord Robert Cecil strongly opposed the suggestion, the recent performance of *The Cenci* being overwhelming proof of the degrading tendencies of the Society's proceedings The proposal was voted down by a majority of over forty.

Other Activities

At another meeting, Mathilde Blind lamented that had Shelley only known Darwin and been post-Darwinian instead of pre-Darwinian he would have realized the falsity of his view that man was the only wrongdoer, for beneath the surface of placid and harmonious nature the same tyranny was raging On one point, nevertheless, Darwin and Shelley agreed the ultimate perfectibility of man Shelley's notion of bringing in the millennium was by an apocalyptic lightning bolt (until, in the last few months of his life, he came to perceive that "the march of the human mind is slow"), whereas Darwin thought in terms of ages

Rossetti objected to the pathetic fallacy involved in Miss Blind's attitude of "holy horror at the atrocity of nature"; and quoted passages from Shelley's poetry which showed him alive to the internecine war in nature Dr Garnett followed with the enlightening Lamarckian observation and faith that man would "undoubtedly retain his hair and toes if he desired, the laws of evolution notwithstanding". He then explained that Shelley meant the Human Mind to be not that of an individual but of the entire race—an interpretation that anticipated Woodberry's in *The Torch* by nineteen years Todhunter, however, thought with Miss Blind that Shelley believed "Birds in their little nests agree", and the Reverend William Harrison once more averred that Shelley was a socialist

The Shelley Society influence spread from London to other cities Manchester formed a branch society, because its leader believed that the people of England, as they surely did, "owed a debt to Shelley's memory" During his life they had despised his opinions, which were in advance of his time, and ridiculed his poetry because it was too spiritual and beautiful for them Now the tide of opinion was turning, and Manchester, which justifiably prided itself on having led the rest of England in many matters political and social, "ought to add its force to the onward flow of the stream that is setting towards reverence for Shelley's genius".

Birmingham, stung by Manchester's action and not to be outdone, sent notice that its people were "not altogether hard and mechanical, we have soft

places in our hearts for literature, for music, and for fine art". Mr J Pierce of Harvard University labored industriously but in vain for a Shelley Society in America

Then came a to-do over whether Brooke or Furnivall in their opening addresses had called Matthew Arnold a "Philistine" Brooke, in a letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette,* denied that he had been discourteous or irreverent to Arnold, and Furnivall followed, saying he referred not to Arnold but to that "Philistine of the Philistines", Mr J Cordy Jeaffreson, "whose name was rightly regarded as not worth mentioning"

Scholastic pedantry, too, began to raise its head The notable French scholar, M James Darmesteter, traced Shelley's "Love's Philosophy" through Ronsard to Anacreon, and M J Parmentier demonstrated that Cowley's "The thirsty earth soaks up the rain" was the source for Shelley's line "Nothing in Nature's sober found"

The Shelley Society thereupon undertook, with some difficulties, a valuable work superintended by Mr Ellis, who found a refuge from his shocked moral sensibilities at Froude's article in directing a Concordance to the Poetry of Shelley Ten volunteers eventually came forward to aid in writing out the 125,000 slips necessary

In the last address to be published in the Notebook of the Society—and its life term fell far short of the ten years Furnivall had predicted for it the year before—Mr A G Ross brought the necessary corrective to the radical socialist members (who were getting out of hand) by protesting against their habit of erecting a Shelley "standard" of right and wrong and referring "every question of morals, manners, metaphysics, ethics, politics and conduct to his example or teaching . " He went on to say that when "the blatant and cruel socialism of the street endeavours to use the lofty and sublime socialism of the study for its own base purposes, it is time that with no uncertain sound all real lovers of the latter should disavow any sympathy with the former", whereupon the ladies and gentlemen of the upper crust no doubt softly uttered a sigh of relief and sank back at ease in their chairs, and the conscience of the moralists was appeased when Ross cordially subscribed to the opinion "Shelley's ethics are rotten" Chairman Rossetti thereupon disagreed, pointing out that the ethic of *The Revolt of Islam* was "do good to your enemies", and asserting that "the men who mingled in the street had a perfect right to propagate their opinions" Salt and Shaw followed in the same vein, the latter declaring Ross's address "the most astonishing one he had ever heard" and defending the poem on all the counts for which Ross had condemned it Ross replied that the Shelley Socialists were not following Shelley's "doctrine of universal love but consistently preaching the doctrine of universal hate"

It was fitting that the last address to be noted in the proceedings was one by Mr Silsbee, that robust, retired sea captain and pirate from Salem, Mass,

who had traced Claire Clairmont to her lair, had had many talks with her, and had some "curious anecdotes anent Claire" to tell His rapturous enthusiasms and his laudations of Shelley made all but Dr Garnett gag, a Mrs Simpson asserting that "the laudatory terms of Silsbee were to her as objectionable as the denunciating terms once so much in vogue" Silsbee replied that the glow of his style represented his feelings, not his critical mind, and thereupon the proceedings of the Society came to an end

A last dying gasp came from Australia when, in consequence of the extreme heat and the illness of Mr Scrivenor, the Melbourne Shelley Society was temporarily dissolved Mr Scrivenor wrote that he was sorry to report "a plentiful lack of enthusiasm of the Shelleyan nature" and that against "religious virulence" Shelley was making "but little way"

And so the Shelley Society, like the lover in *Epipsychidion,* "panted, trembled, and expired" [3]

2. THE SHELLEY SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

Yet the Shelley Society cannot exactly be said to have died a-borning There were the performance of Alma Murray as Beatrice Cenci to remember, the Ellis concordance, and the Shelley Society reprints and other publications, which have proved so useful to Shelley scholars [1]

The history of these reprints may perhaps here be examined briefly. The originator of the facsimile idea as connected with Shelley seems to trace back to Richard Herne Shepherd who, about 1870, issued a reprint of the *Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson* Of this volume Forman complained there was no "intentional indication that it was not the original" [2]

Some six years later Forman himself entered the same field, and between 1876 and 1879 published nine of Shelley's works in limited, privately issued reprints (plus a tenth, Mary Shelley's poem on Shelley) Most of these were put out in three different styles a very few, between one and six, on vellum, more (usually twenty-five) on Whatman's hand-made paper, and a larger number, generally fifty, on plain paper For only one of these volumes, the *Notes on Sculptures in Rome and Florence* (1879), did Forman have the copies numbered in ink, in another, the *Alastor* (1876), the printer certified to the number of copies printed, and signed each one Otherwise, Forman's ten pamphlets were not numbered individually, two of them, indeed, the *Epipsychidion* and the *Œdipus,* were issued in two varieties each, for explanations of which recourse must be had to Forman's bibliography [3]

[3] See *Ibid* for further details
[1] See Wise's list of Shelley Society publications, *A Shelley Library*
[2] H Buxton Forman, *The Shelley Library,* page 13
[3] *Ibid*, pages 100-102

In 1884-1885, Bertram Dobell edited two volumes of Shelleyana, the first, *Shelley, A poem* , distinguished by having each copy numbered and initialed in ink by the editor It was in the second of these that a reason was alleged for printing facsimiles

> The excessive scarcity, and consequently the ever-increasing cost to the collector of the first editions of Shelley's writings, has suggested to me the idea of reprinting those editions exactly in their original form [4]

That this was no new idea, since Shepherd had done it some fifteen years before, we have already seen

The birth of the Shelley Society in 1886 gave a new impetus to the publication of Shelleyana As its Prospectus set forth·

> This Society is started to gather the chief admirers of the Poet into a body which will work to do his memory honour, by meeting to discuss his writings, qualities, opinions, life, and doings, by getting his plays acted, by reprinting the rarest of his original editions, by facsimileing such of his MSS as may be accessible [5]

For his subscription, one guinea, each member was to receive one copy of all the publications of the Society during any current year, and a second copy of the *Note-Book*

The Society issued five series of books

I Papers and abstracts of papers read to the Society
II Type facsimile reprints of original editions
III Reprints of magazine articles on Shelley
IV Miscellaneous
V. Extra Series, given over to photo-lithographic reprints of Shelley's original manuscripts, etc

But the last of these was *not* included in the subscription

> The Committee, finding it to be impossible with the funds at present placed at their disposal to distribute free to Members many books which it deemed advisable to print at once, have decided rather than postpone indefinitely the production of such works, to issue them as an "Extra Series" of the Society's Publications At the same time the Committee wish it to be distinctly understood that this Series will include no book (such as a reprint of one of Shelley's original editions, &c) which is

[4] *Alastor, &c* edited by Bertram Dobell London Reeves and Turner, 1885 Page [iii]

[5] *The Wandering Jew* London Published for the Shelley Society by Reeves and Turner, 1887 Page 4 of advertising matter at back of book

> an actual *necessity*, or which was originally promised gratis to Members in return for their annual subscription Each member will be entitled to purchase one copy of any book appearing in this Series at one half the published price, extra copies can be procured from the Society's publishers and Agents or through the trade in the usual way [6]

In 1886 alone, twenty separate publications were issued under the auspices of the Society or under the editorship of one or another of its more important members, four books went into second editions in the same year Eleven of these were with the Shelley Society imprint, the others lacked it

In 1887 the number of volumes published rose to 22, with 9 of these bearing the Society's imprint In 1888 only 16 were issued, 6 with the Society's name.

During its lifetime, the Society concentrated most heavily on items in Series II, in which exact reproductions of scarce first editions of Shelley were published—a field most attractive to collectors, and therefore most likely to command the highest prices

The idea at first, then, was to make available for the impecunious lover of Shelley exact, inexpensive facsimiles of Shelley's original publications and manuscripts—even to obvious typographical errors This laudable idea did not, however, continue long, for almost from the very start emphasis was placed squarely on the unusual returns which might be obtained from selling these privately printed, limited reprints Thus, the *Note-Book* of the Society observed

> Only three hundred copies have been published, so the quarto possesses the advantage of being "rare" [7]

Or, again, the member was reminded that

> The first issues of the Society's publications are being sold at a premium in the second-hand market [8]

The student was not entirely forgotten, but the collector was apparently what the Society had its eye cocked for·

> The Committee hope that members will subscribe for it largely, and as the edition is strictly limited to 500 copies there is little doubt that it will speedily become "scarce", and an object of interest to the collector as well as the student [9]

[6] *Ibid*, page 22, at end of book

[7] The Shelley Society Publications First Series Number Two *Note-Book of the Shelley Society* Edited by the Honorary Secretaries Part I Being the First Part of Volume I London Published for the Shelley Society by Reeves & Turner, 1888 Page 17, quoting the *Saturday Review*

[8] *Ibid*, page 111

[9] *Ibid*, page 208

Nor was the *Note-Book,* "Edited by the Honorary Secretaries" (Mr Thomas James Wise had become an Honorary Secretary in December, 1887), the only place where the rarity of these limited reprints was emphasized In some of the publications themselves the point was hammered home

> It is perhaps worthy of notice that already, within twelve months of publication, the first edition is being sold at a premium in the second-hand market [10]

The cycle had gone this way at first, since the original editions of Shelley were so expensive, the Shelley Society printed exact facsimiles But by limiting the number printed, and by using a variety of papers, the Society itself created—artificially—rarities which in their turn became scarce and expensive Then the Society widely proclaimed the scarcity and so pushed up the price even more Finally, facsimiles, properly doctored to make them look old and dusty, were palmed off on unsuspecting dealers and collectors, Mr Wise having protested that discriminating dealers had been cruelly hoaxed by them The wheel thus came full circle

The different types of paper used were copied, for the most part, from Forman's example, he had employed vellum, Whatman's hand-made paper and plain paper for his reprints To these the Society added a fourth kind of paper—Van Gelder—and introduced a new treatment of these four, varying their sizes Thus, "small quarto," "large quarto," "large paper," and "small paper" enter into the description of these books, and the same reprint was issued not only on three or four different papers, but also on papers of differing sizes

To this confusion was added, as well, a variety of binding· the 3 copies on vellum, with frontispiece, were bound in blue paper wrappers; the 21 copies on large quarto, hand-made Van Gelder paper, also with frontispiece, were issued in pink paper boards[11], whereas the 500 copies on plain (not water-marked or hand-made) paper *sans* frontispiece were published (for *hoi polloi*) with the familiar olive-green paper boards of the Shelley Society's Publications Once or twice, at least, a vegetable-parchment binding was used The first (on vellum) title-page did not mention the Shelley Society at all, the imprint read "London Printed for Private Distribution Only, 1887" The second and third indicated that Reeves and Turner had published

[10] Wise, Thomas James "Preface" to *Review of Hogg's "Memoirs of Prince Alexy Haimatoff" by Percy Bysshe Shelley* Third Edition Revised London Published for the Shelley Society by Reeves and Turner, 1887 Page 16

[11] These, like the books in the Extra Series, were not *given* to the ordinary members of the Society with their subscriptions The members were told "A few large-paper copies (Quarto size) of some of the Society's Publications have been privately printed, they can be obtained upon application to Mr Bertram Dobell, 66, Queen's Crescent, Haverstock Hill, London, N W" There were 9 volumes so dealt with

The vellum copies were not for sale at any price, apparently, for these went (as their catalogues now show) to Messrs Forman and Wise

(and usually that Richard Clay & Sons had printed) the volume for the Shelley Society, and the cover carried the regular series number of the volume In none of these books was there any indication as to the total number of copies printed in any one edition, the vellum copy read (with an attestation of the printer) · "3 copies only on vellum", and the ordinary edition read · "Of this book 500 copies only have been printed" or that "The issue of this book is strictly limited to 500 copies", statements which were not precisely true, since 524 copies (or more) had been issued, some on different paper, but all from the same plates And, with Wise as the bookkeeper, can we ever be sure that *only* 524 copies were printed?

Dobell had shown the proper way to indicate such printing information in his edition of the *Alastor* (1885)

> This reprint is restricted to 404 copies, *viz* – 4 copies on vellum, 50 copies on Whatman's hand-made paper, 350 copies on toned paper

This notice appeared in all copies, so that no buyer could possibly be deceived

It must be emphasized here that in none of the publications after 1885, whether bearing the imprint of the Society or not, were individual copies numbered Indeed, Forman and Wise sometimes disagree among themselves as to how many copies of certain of these books were printed [12]

The exact duplication in type of original Shelley editions has already been remarked, but with some of the volumes the Society went even further Not only were type and title-page and errors imitated, but so were the covers and labels—in imitation of the original bindings! Thus, with the *Adonais* (1886 and 1887) and with the *Hellas* (August, 1886, and 1887) we have included, respectively, the blue wrappers and the brown covers—facsimiled—of the originals So close was this resemblance made that, long years after, Mr. Wise himself protested

> May I be permitted, through the columns of The Bookman's Journal, to enter a warning against two impudent forgeries of rare books, of which a number of copies appear to have been planted upon the unwary, and which are certainly enjoying an unfortunate success? The two books in question are the first editions of Shelley's *Adonais,* printed in Pisa in 1821, and *Hellas,* printed in London in 1822 The forgeries now circulating have been prepared by taking copies of the very close reprints issued by the Shelley Society to its members in 1886, removing my own introductions, and then rubbing them in dust to impart an appearance of age That the result is sufficiently misleading is

[12] See *Letters from Percy Bysshe Shelley to Jane Clairmont,* 1889; *Letters from Percy Bysshe Shelley to Thomas Jefferson Hogg,* 1897, and *The Cenci,* March, 1886 For other discrepancies of the same kind, see *The Necessity of Atheism,* 1886, and *Letters from Percy Bysshe Shelley to Elizabeth Hitchener,* 1890

> testified by the fact that among the persons who have fallen victims to the fraud are two of the foremost and most widely experienced antiquarian booksellers in London, each of whom was misled by the apparently genuine appearance of the books. How many of the smaller dealers and private collectors have been likewise defrauded, and how many copies of the books have crossed the Atlantic, it is impossible to say Both books are valuable (the *Adonais* in mint condition is now worth about 350 pounds), so the temptation to the fabricator to do his best – or worst – is a strong one

To Mr Wise's quotation Mr A Edward Newton added

> Since the above was written, an *Adonais* has sold in this country for four thousand dollars, so the temptation increases Reader, somewhere deep down in my memory I have hundreds of these "points", and I verily believe that Mr Wise has tens of thousands of them If I could make one-half of Mr Wise's "points" my own, I, too, would be famous Thomas J Wise once made to me the statement that no book could be reproduced, except by photography, in which sooner or later some variation would not be discovered [13]

One wonders after reading these quotations whether Mr Wise did not protest too much, particularly when he had the impudence to inform the Bibliographical Society, through its officers, that it was their duty to work out some method of detecting and exposing these fakes

There was—and is—nothing to prevent these exact facsimiles turned out by the Wise Shelley-Reprint Factory from being stripped of their introductions and rebound or rebacked, or reproduced with paper bindings or covers made also in exact facsimile Hence it behooves collectors who possess or are about to purchase original issues of *Adonais* or *Alastor,* or *Hellas,* etc , to have, as Mr Wise recommended, some expert or, better, a body of experts pass on these books to see whether they are genuine in fact and what, if anything, has been done to them Surely the day will come when book collectors will insist on informed opinion, based upon tests, and will cease to expose themselves and their hundreds and thousands of dollars to that blindest of the blind gods, *Caveat Emptor*

How much damage has been done to the rare book trade and to unsuspecting collectors by this spree of privately printed reprints issued under the guise of the Shelley Society we can only conjecture How much profit came to Wise, who handled, apparently alone, the printing arrangements for the Society we shall probably never know Two bits of evidence only can we offer on this point It will be recalled that Forman edited a number of

[13] *This Book Collecting Game,* pp 223, 232

Shelley pamphlets in the '70's In the 1886 Shelley Society edition of *The Cenci* there were advertisements at the back (page 2) offering for sale through Reeves and Turner copies of *The Daemon of the World* (1876), *Notes on Sculptures in Rome and Florence* (1879), and *The Pedigree of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1880), all edited by Forman Of the first, there had been a total of only 52 copies printed, of the second, 75 copies, of the third, 50 copies for England Yet sales of these three had been so poor that in 1886 none of these volumes was out of print![14]

The conclusion would seem to be, then, that Forman did not make a financial success with his privately printed books in the period before the Shelley Society, whatever his editorial success may have been

As for Wise, we are fortunate to have a glimpse at one of his transactions of the early period In April, 1886, Richard Clay and Sons printed privately for Wise *Lines on the Inaugural Meeting of the Shelley Society,* the verse skit, written by Andrew Lang, already quoted, which had appeared in the *Saturday Review* for March 13th Wise had asked Lang's permission to reprint and, receiving a curt refusal, had gone ahead anyway

In a letter dated May 5, 1886, Wise writes

> A Lang's "Lines" seem to be "wanted" – I've had *13* applications for them during the last few days! Good! –

The total printing of this volume allegedly was 34, of which 4 were on fine vellum and 30 on plain paper Selling thirteen in such a short time would suggest that on this particular venture, at least, Wise did not come off badly, and we are probably justified in believing that Wise's little books have cost many a collector—who thought he had a genuine "first"—a pretty penny

3. THE PAINFUL DEATH OF THE SHELLEY SOCIETY

Conceived in glowing terms, born with such high hopes, the Shelley Society flared brightly for a time Its membership soared to 402, including such widely different types as Sir Percy Shelley and the "mad" Silsbee, Furnivall and Wise But its broad net never held either Dowden or Browning

Formed in 1886, the society began strongly

> At first things proceeded with the Shelley Society well for the present and promisingly for the future, but before the end of the year 1886 there was a serious hitch, owing to the setting to music of the choruses in Shelley's drama of *Hellas,* and per-

[14] This statement presupposes, of course, that the editions were limited to the number stated in Forman's *The Shelley Library,* published in 1886

> formance of the work in St James's Hall Dr Sellé, who was the father-in-law of Mr Forman, was the musical composer [1]

That *Hellas* was obviously not an "acting drama" was early recognized by the Committee, who resolved

> to perform it with recitation of the solo parts, and music for the choruses [2]

Elaborate preparations were made a choir of 120 members was assembled, a "full band" was hired, Dr William Christian Sellé (composer of the overture for and the sixteen songs from *Hellas*) put them through their musical paces, and a Mr Podmore, who was to give the recitations, practiced assiduously Then

> *Hellas* was performed at St James's Hall, with a full band and chorus, on the evening of Tuesday, Nov 16, 1886, before an audience of some 3,000 people by whom it was well received The Committee, however, have resolved not to repeat the experiment [3]

The reason there was to be no repetition, Mr Rossetti explained, was that

> A member of the Committee to whom the arrangements had been entrusted, with strict injunctions not to exceed a certain limit of cost, neglected this precaution, and let us in for an expenditure which we neither intended nor were qualified to meet [4]

Some of these expenditures can be scanned on the balance sheets of the Society for 1886 The cost for the orchestra was £59 4s 4d , for the choir, £40, for the halls (both practice and performance), £32 6d , for Dr Sellé, £10 10s , plus other incidentals to bring the total charges for the *Hellas* to £181 13s 3d !! This was almost exactly twice the cost (£92 10s 10d) for *The Cenci*

It was as a direct result of these large sums that members were told:

> It is clear that not only in respect of *The Cenci* performance, followed by the *Hellas,* but also in respect of the publications, the Committee was far too liberal to the Society – or shall we say, the Society was too liberal to its Members? – in 1886, and was over-desirous of repeating the like course in 1887 The consequence of this sanguine method of dealing with our moderate

[1] Rossetti, William Michael *Some Reminiscences* New York Scribner's, 1906. Volume II, page 390

[2] *The Wandering Jew* London Reeves & Turner, 1887 Page 23 of the Society's advertising matter at back of book

[3] *Ibid*

[4] Rossetti, William Michael, *op cit*, page 391

> funds is, that the cost of *The Cenci* and *Hellas* absorbed our income of 1886, and that we have run up a heavy printer's bill, and must now lay ourselves out to retrench until we shall have cleared off our liabilities [5]

Thus the two dramatic enterprises alone had cost a total of £274, whereas in 1886 only £396 (and 1 shilling) came to the Society in the way of subscriptions The firm of Richard Clay & Sons received in 1886 £189, other printers £24 (these payments representing a fraction of the printing costs outstanding for the year) or £213 in all

The retrenchment which was attempted at once was a simple and obvious one

> With a view to diminishing the loss, some of the publications which had been intended for 1886 are postponed, and one of the extra publications of the Society, Dr Sellé's score of the music of *Hellas,* has been transferred to the list of ordinary publications, and will be issued accordingly gratis to all Members From the same cause the operation of the Society in 1887 must also be necessarily restricted to some slight extent, unless there be a corresponding increase in the total number of members [6]

The Sellé volume had at first been listed as "Number 1" of the "Extra Series", books distinguished in the sense that they were not available to members of the Society except at extra cost—half the published price A double reason for taking it out of this special category might have been its poor sale (even at 2 shillings some members did not want 98 pages of music!) as well as the fact that forcing it on the members as part of their subscription return in 1887 correspondingly decreased by one the number of volumes which the Society felt itself obligated to print

Reduction of the printing cost for 1887 and thereafter was clearly necessary because

> The Sub-Committee for publishing purposes (I did not belong to it) issued, in the first year or two of the Society, an amount of Shelley literature more than equivalent to the annual subscription of a guinea each, and we soon found ourselves burdened with a heavy debt to the printer [7]

We have already pointed out above how many and varied were the publications of 1886 which precipitated this burdensome debt, and which surely must have been increased by the printing cost of the volumes issued in connection with the performance of *Hellas.*

[5] *The Shelley Society's Papers Part I* London Published for the Shelley Society by Reeves & Turner, 1888 Page 23 at back of volume

[6] *Ibid*, page 15 at back

[7] Rossetti, William Michael, *op cit*, page 391

1) The *Prologue to Hellas,* edited by Wise in two editions, one of 28, the other of 36 pages Neither edition was available or even known to the general membership of the Society, limited as each was to 20 copies Nor did the imprint of either mention the Shelley Society
2) *Hellas* itself, also edited by Wise, and also in two editions, one issued in July, one in August, 1886 The first was issued in 5 varieties, including vellum and large Whatman's paper, the second, in 4 varieties, also on vellum and on large Van Gelder paper, as well as with the brown paper wrappers of the original in facsimile
3) *Hellas The Choruses Set to Music by William Christian Sellé* There were two varieties at least of this, both on plain paper, but each in a different binding This, the first musical publication of the Society, was printed by Spottiswoode and Company and not, as usual, by Richard Clay & Sons

What is of course immediately apparent is the tremendous expenditure incurred with the printing and production costs of this one drama.

Who, then, had plunged the Society, with its severely limited funds, into this reckless printing adventure? It was Mr Wise, for whom the members had warm regard

> To Mr Thomas J Wise the Committee also feel greatly indebted He has had the control of all the Society's printing work, and has edited three of the Reprints, and has, moreover, rendered most useful and highly valued aid to the Hon Secretary [8]

It might also be said—now—that the Society was "most useful" to Mr Wise as well Indeed, it is with considerable pride, and with no little arrogance, that Mr Wise boasts

> When the Shelley Society issued under my superintendence its series of type-facsimile reprints of a number of the original editions of Shelley's works, I took advantage of the opportunity of having the type set for some of them specially reimposed to suit a crown quarto page and printed three copies of each upon fine vellum Each was furnished with a certificate signed by the printer, Messrs Richard Clay & Sons, Ltd The books so dealt with were *Alastor, Adonais, Hellas, Epipsychidion, Rosalind and Helen, An Address to the Irish People, The Masque of Anarchy, The Wandering Jew,* and *Review of Hogg's "Memoirs of Prince Alexy Haimatoff"* [9]

[8] *The Shelley Society's Papers* Part I, *op cit*, page 15 at back
[9] Wise, Thomas J *A Shelley Library,* page 37

Wise does not here include the six other pamphlets of 1886 which also were printed on vellum—or the seven of 1887—or the seven of 1888—or the four of 1889—or the seven from 1890-1898 He does not reveal that all but the last two of these pamphlets were printed during the life-time of the Shelley Society—but that the imprint of the Society never found its way to the vellum pages

Was there sarcasm in these words·

> since December [1887] Mr Wise has undertaken the duties of Honorary Secretary No member of the Society is better entitled than Mr Wise to the thanks of his fellow-members, on various grounds which need not be here particularised, and to no one could the duties of Honorary Secretary have been more confidently assigned by the Committee, who heartily acknowledge his alacrity in accepting the post – well known to them to be no sinecure [10]

Wise edited these facsimiles, had three vellum copies of each printed for his own use, and handled all the printing arrangements When the bills were presented to the Society for payment, were Wise's vellum copies charged to him? Perhaps—if the auditors of the Society had done their work thoroughly, and who were the auditors in 1886 and 1887 when the heaviest printing was done? They were, in order, Alfred Forman and Thomas J Wise! At the bottom of the 1886 report, for example, we find the curious words "Audited and Found Correct" above the names of Alfred Forman and the Honorary Secretary-to-be, Mr Wise [11]

It requires no great imagination to see now where Wise acquired his huge stock of reprints of Shelley—or how he managed to stand the repeated expenditures for printing on vellum or on pink-covered Whatman's paper volumes which he kept for himself The Shelley Society was good to Wise, though he was not good for it

These scarce books, these over-printings, these high costs[12] had their inevitable results

> The issue of books was then restricted, with the natural result that the subscriptions fell off The Society became woefully impecunious The members of the Committee, those who had been in office at the dates when the respective publications were ordered, were held to be responsible for the debt half a dozen

[10] *The Shelley Society's Papers* Part I, *op cit*, page 26 at back

[11] *Ibid*, page 20 at back A Forman and Wise audited also the 1887 "Cash Account", but in 1889 the auditors were changed to John Slark, W Walker, and Alfred Forman

[12] Richard Clay & Sons received from the Shelley Society the following amounts 1886 £189 1887 £311 1888 £173 The high-water marks were hit, it should be noticed, while Wise was one of the auditors

> or so, including myself, undertook, much against the grain, to meet the entire liability by paying annual instalments [13]

In 1891, The Honorary Secretary, Thomas J Wise, entered a pathetic plea for members to pay up their dues because "The Committee is anxious to enter upon a more liberal printing programme for 1891" Now, really, could anyone have been "more liberal" with the Shelley Society's funds than Mr. Wise had been in 1886 and 1887, the two gala years of printing? The "Special Report and Appeal, 1888-9" had sketched in thumb-nail fashion the dilemma of the Society

> For the Committee, things are not so satisfactory Owing to the uncertainty as to what the number of members really was – many being habitually in arrears with their subscriptions, and not letting the Secretary know of any intention to fall away permanently – the three years' operations have left a considerable liability for printing This liability the Committee accepts as its own, and has made arrangements to meet whatever is finally deficient in the event of the list not increasing to the necessary extent

Special donations were solicited, Mr Wise gave £10 toward the deficit Sir Percy Shelley allowed the Society to print 100 copies of *Shelley's "Hymn to Pan", Set to Music by His Son* . to help the cause The Reverend Stopford A Brooke gave a lecture entitled "Some Remarks upon the Lyric Poetry of Shelley", on June 26, 1889—for which admission was charged—"By way of helping to liquidate the Society's debt for printing"

Some of the Committee members paid heavily

> I don't know with precision how much I paid I suppose more than £120, apart from my yearly subscriptions [14]

But the straw that was too heavy came from another direction

> There was also another very untoward transaction which contributed to hasten our finale In 1892, the centenary of Shelley's birth, we were anxious to make some extra effort to celebrate the occurrence A sub-committee was appointed to provide for a second performance of *The Cenci,* there had been a first and decidedly successful performance of this tragedy in 1886 My name, I am glad to say, did not figure on the sub-committee, nor was I at all cognizant of the details of its proceedings But then came the dismal announcement that the contributions had vanished they, when the scheme seemed to have collapsed, had not been finally kept apart, but had been used for the general purposes of the Society – mainly for paying off the debt to

[13] Rossetti, William Michael, *op cit*, page 391
[14] Rossetti, William Michael, *op cit*, page 391

> the printer I then heard the details from a member of the sub-committee, a most honourable man, who had taken an active part in writing about Shelley I will not enter into details as to the responsibility for this course of action [15]

It seems almost superfluous to remark that the man who was in charge of printing was the Honorary Secretary, Thomas J. Wise

The meetings of the Society became formalities, the membership dwindled away The Society dissolved in 1895; some of its remaining liabilities were settled in November, 1902 But as late as 1906, Wise entered into an agreement with Watts and Company for a reprint of *The Necessity of Atheism*

The Shelley Society was dead, but Wise had learned much in its short life, knowledge which costs others dearly, even today.

4 SILSBEE AND THE HARVARD NOTEBOOKS

Readers of Henry James's *The Aspern Papers* (1888) will recall that the author built his story on a certain basis of fact which he had gathered either from his Harvard friends and associates or from what was circulating in literary circles in England in the 1870's and 1880's As James tells the story, an astute lover of Aspern (Shelley) rarities sought Miss Bordereau (Claire) in Florence for the purpose of securing her Shelley treasures Gradually he came to understand that he might have them if he would engage to marry her unattractive niece of fifty, Miss Tina (Paola), but unable to bring himself to such an immolation, he had to be content with a portrait of the poet—the niece, after Miss Bordereau's death, seeing her prospects of marriage coming to naught, having committed to the flames the priceless love-letters of Aspern to her aunt

The underlying story, however, is equally bizarre if not so melodramatic In Salem, Massachusetts, lived a retired sea captain with a consuming passion for Shelley and Shelley's poetry, who became also a pirate hunting for Shelley treasures and relics. It is doubtful whether the raptures of Elinor Wylie over Shelley ever equalled those of the old gentleman who, like the Ancient Mariner, was always flowing over with a tale to tell about Shelley, usually ending with a rhapsodic recital of a Shelley lyric, like "The Cloud", delivered with such eloquence and fervor as to hold everybody spellbound and to draw "iron tears down Pluto's cheek." Captain Edward Augustus Silsbee, as this gentleman was called, became in due course admitted to London literary society, and a member of The Shelley Society

[15] *Ibid*, pages 391-392

He ingratiated himself so skillfully as to elicit the generous praise which Dr Richard Garnett had for any one who was devoted to Shelley and championed Shelley's cause Garnett has given us the following portrait "Mr. Silsbee was a most remarkable man, much such an one as Trelawny might have been if Trelawny could have been made amiable and gracious without parting with any of his motive force He has travelled far and thought much A grizzled, weather-beaten veteran of fine physique, his discourse was mainly of poetry and art, on both of which he would utter deeper sayings than are often to be found in print He was the most enthusiastic critic of Shelley the present writer has known, but also the most acute and discriminating"

Arming himself with all the biographical information he could gather, Silsbee contrived to meet J W Williams, the grandson of Jane Williams, and persuaded him to part with the guitar Jane played upon when she sang songs to Shelley's delight Together they presented it through Dr Garnett to the Bodleian on June 21, 1898 Learning that Claire Clairmont was living as a retired elderly lady in Florence, Silsbee journeyed thither, established himself in the pension where she and Paola were residing, and proceeded to worm his way into Claire's presence and confidence In after years (June 8, 1887) he regaled the Shelley Society with anecdotes of Shelley which he had gathered from his several visits with Claire

> The range of the lecturer's discourse on this occasion was very extensive, and the textual information and curious anecdotes anent Claire Clairmont were very interesting In 1873 he (the Chairman) (W M Rossetti) had met Claire, had had an interesting talk with her Mr Silsbee, however, had had many conversations with her, and was in a position to give much valuable information

It is unfortunate for Shelley biography that the Society issued no memoranda either of Silsbee's or of Rossetti's conversations with Claire, but we know that Thomas J Wise was very indignant when he discovered that Silsbee had in his possession some original Shelley documents

According to Wise, Silsbee apparently told this story around London with more triumph than discretion He had, according to Wise, obtained his Shelley MSS from Paola Clairmont under a bogus promise of marriage, and was proud of having bluffed (swindled) "a foolish old maid of fifty or more" Wise, relaying the story to Wrenn, called Silsbee a disgrace to the country and to American manhood [1]

Mr H Buxton Forman was also much aggrieved to find that Captain Silsbee had been to Florence ahead of him and carried away treasures that he had expected to find when he closed final negotiations (July 30, 1879) with Paola Clairmont. Claire had died March 19, 1879

[1] Ratchford, *op cit*, pp 549-550

"When by a good hap," he writes, "I acquired that splendid 'pig-in-a-poke' the Clairmont collection of Shelley documents and relics of various kinds, it was not wholly without disappointment that I found the sealed-up collection, on being opened, did not include certain items, which, as I think rightfully, I had expected to find. There was, it is true, good value even at the comparatively low prices then current for such articles as I was buying without even a preliminary glimpse of a single one of them, but it grieved me not to find the book of manuscript poems which Claire Clairmont possessed, or the miniature portrait of Allegra, daughter of Byron and Claire, or the long series of letters which I believed that lady to have received from Trelawny I have never regretted that in those circumstances, I made a pilgrimage to the gay city of Vienna in search of the coveted treasures in question, found the late Miss Paola Clairmont, from whom I had bought the elder lady's collection, still in possession of two of the important items named [*viz* Trelawny's letters and the miniature], paid her her price for the annexation of them to the main body of the papers, books, and relics, and brought them home with joy to the house from which I am sending these belated remarks to press Of the mutilated manuscript volume, containing fair copies of many of his published poems, which also should be here, there is a sad tale to tell An American who had been residing in the same house at Florence with the Clairmonts had been bidding against me for the collection, but as his rather free bids turned out to be only in bills at long date, the executrix decided to accept my cash rather than his paper, in which she lacked confidence This man, however, had 'borrowed' and not restored the precious manuscript book—which now graces the classic precincts of Harvard College, while I am 'left lamenting' " (Introduction to *Letters of E Trelawney*, pp x-xi) Forman did not need to lament, while Silsbee extracted only one Shelley letter from Paola, Forman secured twenty-four, nineteen of which he proceeded to sell at auction for good sums. Silsbee, in later years, gave to Harvard a second Shelley Note Book of which Forman and Wise knew nothing, and he is reported to have given other MSS material he had acquired over a period of years, from 1889-1912, to the Bodleian.

5 SHELLEYANA AND THE WAYS OF H BUXTON FORMAN AND THOMAS JAMES WISE (1876-1892)

The two men who were to do most for Shelley bibliography were the assiduous bibliophiles, collectors, and booksellers, H. Buxton Forman and Thomas J Wise

Forman combined an unqualified enthusiasm for Shelley as "the saviour of the world" with indefatigable bibliographical devotion to text and edition

As a tireless searcher for Shelley documents, letters, and relics, rare editions and association items, he created a Shelley library unrivalled at the time Forman had the advantage over Wise of a ten years' start in the field, and of friendly working relations with Sir Percy Florence and Lady Shelley To them he owed many priceless items in his collection, some of which he received as gifts for his scholarly labors in preparing and publishing the classic edition of Shelley's prose and poetry in eight sumptuous volumes, and many others he acquired through purchase. As he was collecting in a period just before Shelley rarities were to experience a sensational rise in value, he secured his items at extremely low prices (or as gifts), and during his lifetime gradually sold some of them, many at handsome profits

As we have seen, he secured the priceless treasures of Claire Clairmont and Trelawny's letters to her, Claire's manuscript journal, and ninety letters from Mary to her He also obtained the *Adonais,* which sold in the Forman sale in 1920 for $2050, a portion of Shelley's corrected copy of *Queen Mab,* for $6000, *Œdipus Tyrannus,* for $6100, and the original MS of *Julian and Maddalo,* which realized $16,250 The Shelley letters that Forman retained to the end brought high prices, some selling for $525, $750, and $1025, each

As early as 1870 Forman had entered upon his long career as a manufacturer of rare Shelley and other titles The formation of the Shelley Society as we have noticed brought him a large and profitable trade, and soon he was emulated and sometimes joined by Thomas J Wise in issuing a long series of privately printed rarities, many in facsimile When we realize that these gentlemen followed the same practice with numerous other nineteenth-century poets, and when we study the catalogues and bibliographies illustrating their treasures, we have a clearer comprehension of how they financed and secured their superb collections

After the death of Forman in 1917, his great library seems to have been purchased outright at a great bargain and (much to the wrath of T J Wise) brought to America for auction Part I comprised 1000 items, Part II, 1228, and Part III over 1000 Sold in 1920, the entire collection realized $172,624

The remaining Shelley library in the possession of Mr Wise, the result of his earliest and most sustained collecting passion, he displayed with undisguised pride in *A Shelley Library,* (1924), a descriptive and richly illustrated volume of over 126 pages

We do not need here to animadvert upon the Carter-Pollard disclosures of 1934, those of Mr Partington in *Forging Ahead,* 1939, or those of Miss Fanny Ratchford in her recent volumes in which the peculiar activities of Forman and Wise are further exposed It is incumbent on us, however, to point out what appear to us certain exceedingly dubious and suspicious items in the collections of these scholars and book traders in Shelley, and to make clear what seems to us their contributions to the Shelley Legend

The Shelley Relics

As might be expected, after Trelawny had taken from the funeral pyre Shelley's heart and pieces of his skull, this initial act led to the discovery and almost infinite multiplication of other relics of Shelley and his friends, following the same law of relic and ritual growth that we find in the Middle Ages By the time a hundred years had passed since Shelley's death, the remains of Shelley's bones, or ashes, or hair, had become widespread, and the specimens of them in the Forman and Wise collection are reminiscent of those which Chaucer's Pardoner was so eager to sell after concluding his sermon on cupidity We are led to wonder by what means the relics of Shelley and his circle so multiplied and scattered can be authenticated What shall we think of two envelopes in a famous American collection—one containing an ample swirl of brown hair and the other, of black hair—alleged to be from the heads of Mary Shelley and Claire Clairmont—the only authentication being the signature, on each envelope, of Thomas J Wise? What shall we think also of the following list? Shall we believe that Forman and Wise were manufacturing not only rare Shelley titles but Shelley relics also? The following descriptions are only a sample of some of the relics now scattered over the world—all duly identified and authenticated

1 An authentic and precious relic of the poet, being a portion of his cremated remains enshrined in a beautiful gold locket studded with aquamarines From the collection of Buxton Forman, who prized it as a sacred relic of the poet

2 Shelley's hair, originally belonged to Claire, sold by Paola to H Buxton Forman, who passed it to Wise

3 Two locks of Shelley's hair, both dark brown, one of 1816, one of 1822, in the Sanctum at Boscombe Manor

4. Shelley's hair in a small red morocco "porte-monnaie" formerly belonging to Claire Clairmont With a lock of Allegra's hair and a lock of the hair of R H Horne Tied up with Horne's hair is a lock of another, that of a lady, who has written on the wrapper 'For his ring—the lock of hair he wished for tonight—but he must ask no question Dec 26th' Beneath this Horne has written 'Tied up with a lock of my own H' Forman sale, no 720 Sold for $27 50

5 Leaf plucked from the grave of Shelley by Robert Hoe, Jr, No 2391 in the Frederickson sale Sold for 37 cents

6 The remains of Percy Bysshe Shelley with locks of the hair of Shelley and Mary and some of the poet's ashes Inserted in the front doublure under glass in two gilt frames are locks of the hair of Shelley and Mary Inserted in the end doublure, under glass in an urn-shaped frame, are the Ashes of Shelley (including a fragment of the skull) given by Trelawny to Claire

7 Mary Shelley's hair given to Trelawny, who presented it to William Rossetti accompanied by a similar lock of Claire's Sold by Rossetti to Wise in 1890

This curious traffic in relics brings to mind another strange offering at the Frederickson sale, though unrelated to Shelley, namely, a portion of earth from the first shovelful cast upon the grave of Washington Irving—sold for 15 cents! Who shall say that the age of relics has passed as an exploded superstition of the human mind?

Mr. Wise and "Charles Alfred Seymour"

Another humorous piece of rascality and dubious ethics in the Shelley Legend we find Mr Wise revealing with amused triumph in *A Shelley Library* (pp 82-83), where he gives a full and unblushing explanation of how he outsmarted Lady Shelley as well as Edward Dowden, and inflicted upon the book world an entirely fictitious person, "Charles Alfred Seymour". Dowden had secured on loan from Mr William Esdaile the early love poems which Shelley wrote to Harriet before he came under the influence of Mary In due course Dowden returned the manuscripts to the owner, but not, as he reveals (very confidentially) before he had made a copy of them He also secured Mr Esdaile's permission to reprint them in his biography, much against Lady Shelley's wishes since the poems counted heavily against one of her main contentions—that Shelley never loved Harriet

At any rate, Mr Wise saw a splendid opportunity to get out another one of his so-called limited editions of these poems He knew that Lady Shelley strenuously objected to the early poems being spread to confound the argument she had built up that Shelley had never loved Harriet or been happy with her, and only really loved Mary For once, however, in Wise Lady Shelley met her match, for she had no claims whatever to the poems Without any permission from Dowden, Wise reprinted the poems from Dowden's *Life,* taking care as usual to create rarities in the process, the first edition is described in his bibliography as one of five copies on vellum, 1887, and another first edition is one of thirty copies printed upon English hand-made paper Both were actually printed by Richard Clay & Sons, London, but purportedly by the "Philadelphia Historical Society"—an equally fictitious institution designed evidently to be confused with that ancient and honorable institution, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania He then sent a presentation copy to Dowden and asked for more poems Dowden acknowledged the gift with a masterpiece of irony

> You are very good to give me (on behalf of "Mr Charles Alfred Seymour") the beautiful quarto When a gentleman of the road makes you stand and deliver, and then courteously

> hands you back your purse, you can do no less than make a bow and say that he has the manners of a Prince
> And so I feel to that amiable member of the Philadelphia Historical Society He has done his work with the greatest care and correctness as far as I can see, and I hope you will greet him for me in the words of Shelley in his Homer's hymn which tells of the light-fingered doings of the first of pirates I will keep the veil of darkness over his misdeeds, but I fear I cannot help him to the "other songs"

Yet Wise in his bibliographical explanation and defense says Dowden, Rossetti, and Forman were privy to this deception—a statement sufficiently refuted by Dowden's letter of acknowledgment

Furthermore, when we examine other descriptions that Wise has inserted in his catalogue, *A Shelley Library,* we are not impressed with the dependability of his statements and we are troubled by his omissions He makes no reference, for example, to the two sets of postmarks or any of the other irregularities in the December 16, 1816, letter He omits, too, any mention of the Moxon-Browning 1852 edition of Shelley's letters as forgeries (page 92), though they were almost immediately disclosed to be spurious The reader, using Wise, would be led to think them genuine In fact, neither the bibliographical descriptions nor transcriptions, nor his tantalizing excerpts from letters in his collection, can be relied upon, and the student is hereby warned not to accept any of his bibliographical statements without independent checking The next sections show why.

Shelley's Proposal for Reform

In 1887, Buxton Forman issued as an Extra Series No 5 of the Shelley Society's Publications a photo-lithographic facsimile of a manuscript, alleged to be in Shelley's handwriting, "the first and last manuscript" of his *A Proposal for Putting Reform to the Vote Throughout the Kingdom.* Shelley wrote the essay in the early months of 1817 His pamphlet came out about the middle of March. Mr. Forman does not conjecture how many printed copies were struck off Shelley asked Ollier his publisher to advertise "not sparingly", to send copies to an enclosed list of 57 liberals, "20 or 30 copies to Messrs Hookham & Co Bond Street without explanation" and 20 copies to himself addressed to Mr Hunt[1]

The essay exists, however, not only in regular printed form as issued, but in *original proof sheets bearing sketchy drawings from Shelley's* pen They were preserved by Hunt, and acquired with Hunt's other Shelleyana by Sir Percy and Lady Shelley for the Boscombe Manor collection.

[1] Forman, Introduction, pp 8-9

The manuscript in question, according to Forman, "remained in the hands of Mr Ollier, the publisher, whose family in the fullness of time, sold it in July, 1879" The manuscript was purchased at auction by Mr Francis Harvey of St James's Street, who permitted Forman to use it in preparing the text and notes of the essay for his standard *Prose Works of Shelley* (4 volumes, 1880)

When Forman's notes came under the eagle eye of Thomas J Wise, he visited Mr Harvey and purchased the manuscript Surely, if this story is correct, we could not ask for a more water-tight provenance in authentication of a Shelley manuscript

This, however, is one of the instances—and there are many—in which the evidence from provenance is insufficient, for good-sounding and respectable provenances can be concocted more easily than forgeries witness "Mrs Julia Puddicombe of Bovey Tracey, near Torquay, and Mrs Clark of Scroop House" as the provenance given by Schultess-Young,[2] for his nineteen Major Byron forged letters, put forth as genuine (1872)

The difficulty lies in the manuscript itself, which is *not in Shelley's handwriting* The chirography resembles that of the Wise letter of December 16, already discredited as a forgery, in Part III

In the accompanying eight pages of illustrations, we have reproduced, first, the opening page of Shelley's letter to Claire from Pisa, December 11, 1821 and, second, another sample of his genuine hand from page 66 of the Harvard Note Book I Next comes Page 5 from the Forman facsimile

Once more, notice the even slant which marks both the letter to Claire and the page from the Note Book, the narrow, pointed, long letters, and the evidences of rapid smooth-flowing penmanship in each Contrast this with the appearance of Page 5 of the Forman facsimile taken as a whole note the rounder letters, the lack of uniform slant, and the retouching of individual letters, such as the top of the "P" in "Parliament", sixth word of third line, and the tail of the "g" in "greater", third word in fourth line, and the capital "T" in "The", next to the last line Observe the very frequent use of the long tails in "g's" and "y's" without regard to their positions in words Notice that on Page 5 the small letters are larger in proportion to the tall letters than they are in the two preceding standards

Even to the unskilled eye of a layman, there is little similarity between the standards and the writing on Page 5 If, however, we compare Page 5 with the next plate, which we have reproduced earlier as Page 3 of the Wise forgery of December 15-16, it is at once evident that the general appearance is very much the same in comparison with it The next plate, which reproduces another example of Shelley's genuine handwriting, from his letter to

[2] See Wilfred Partington's *Forging Ahead*, 1939, pp 266ff, for Mr Wise's methods of manufacturing provenance for his spurious Reading Edition of Mrs Browning's *Sonnets*, and also Carter and Pollard's *Enquiry*, pp 23-25

Godwin of February 21, 1816, bears little resemblance to these The lack of uniformity in the slant is present in the Forman Page 5 and the December 15-16 letter in about the same degree, both have rounder letters, a plentiful supply of long-tailed "g's" and "y's" and larger small letters as compared with the tall ones than are to be found in the genuine Shelley script of the Godwin letter In fact, what has been said about the handwriting of the letter of December 15-16 in Part III applies with equal force to the handwriting in Forman's alleged Shelley facsimile, so that it is unnecessary to repeat the detailed differences

Page 5 of the Forman manuscript has been selected because of the expense of reproducing the entire work of sixteen and a quarter pages Page 15 is just as good a sample, or any other page Turning next to Page 15 of the Forman facsimile and comparing it again with the page opposite, which repeats Page 3 of the Wise forgery of December 15-16, we again find a much greater similarity between the two than between them and the specimens of Shelley's genuine handwriting The number "15" at the top of the page is very poorly executed, the lines being wavy in the extreme Also, the line quality on the rest of this page is poor and the slant lacks the uniformity so noticeable in all of Shelley's genuine handwriting The word "imperfections," sixth word, third line, is very poorly done, and the "p" has the lower portion slanted to the right and the top part nearly vertical

The remarkable variation in the handwriting in the short space of sixteen and a quarter pages of this alleged pamphlet is in itself something to give one pause when it is contrasted with the uniformity of slant and proportions of the letters in the Harvard Notebook in poems like "A Vision of the Sea" and "Hymn to Mercury"

But it may be objected, who would go to all the trouble of forging nearly seventeen pages of intricate MS with all the crossings and corrections, and how could it be done? Forgers often spend astonishing amounts of labor on long manuscripts witness Major Byron's forgery of a purported Shelley essay against religious intolerance in the Pierpont Morgan collection But, it will be objected, the MS gives every evidence of the writer in the process of composing, with all his false starts crossed out, and substitute words and phrases introduced?

There are two answers: the forger had either Shelley's original manuscript before him—unlikely since it is not extant anywhere, so far as we know—or he made up his manuscript from Shelley's corrected proofs, reproducing also *the sketchy drawings from Shelley's pen*—for Shelley manuscripts and proofs frequently contain interesting drawings, especially of trees, on the margins or on blank leaves All that were necessary were time and patience and the skill which a Major Byron had acquired, and the corrected (printed) proof sheets as a model before him in order to turn out readily enough this purported original This statement, however, must stand in the realm of

plausible conjecture rather than proof until it is possible to compare this purported MS with the proof sheets, which presumably exist somewhere among the three divisions of Shelleyana which Lady Shelley bequeathed, with provisions to make access to them as inconvenient and difficult as possible

Below the verso of leaf 14 bearing a drawing of a classic temple and of trees (facing page 15 of the MS) is an authenticating note written by Leigh Hunt which reads

> I have no doubt that the above is a sketch by my dear friend Shelley's own hand
>
> Leigh Hunt

What more could anyone want for the authentication of a manuscript than Hunt's own testimony duly signed by him?

The difficulty again is that the handwriting of this authentication is an imitation of Leigh Hunt's and not his genuine autograph Observe the two specimens shown·

The upper is a photograph of the forged attestation in question—the lower, with Hunt's real signature, is made up of the same words, cut out of reproductions of genuine Hunt manuscripts in the archives of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and placed together For the words *sketch* and *doubt,* however, we had to send to the Brewer Leigh Hunt collection of the University of Iowa, and the "s" in *sketch* is a capital "S" This composite of words actually written by Hunt has, of course, its limitations, in size, slant, etc, but it does at least serve to show how Hunt would have fashioned his script if he had written this attestation It takes no expert, we trust, to detect the differences between these two scripts As in all such instances, the layman, when confronted with an autograph, is helpless without genuine standards of comparison

Any authentication of this sort by one of Shelley's friends in a Shelley manuscript, seems, in any case, too good to be true, and is ground enough for suspicion, for why should Hunt ever think that Shelley's 'doodles' in the midst of a Shelley manuscript needed any statement of his as to their genuineness? Hunt had other things to do than writing authenticating statements on Shelley manuscripts—and even he could not have envisioned in his life time the fabulous prices Shelley manuscripts would be bringing in subsequent years An authentication of this sort is, rather, a blunder of forgers and fakers who overreach themselves in an effort to establish authentication and provenance

Who, then, forged this manuscript and the December 16 letter? We have already traced in Part III, Chapter 3, the activities of Major Byron and have observed that, in addition to quantities of Byron and Shelley letters, he left behind him *eight or nine portfolios* of manuscript forgeries. It is plausible, then, to suggest that he prepared this *Proposal* manuscript from the proofs If he did not—some other forger used these proofs, with the corrections and the

sketchy drawings before him At any rate, neither the handwriting of the text is Shelley's, nor is the authenticating note Leigh Hunt's

If our doubts, then, of this manuscript are justified, we may ask why did Mr Wise suppose that the December 16 letter or this *Proposal* was genuine? Mr Wise took very great pride in his accomplishments as an expert on Shelley's handwriting, and he was a vociferous condemner of Shelley forgeries and piracies Mr Partington in his chapter 5 has revealed Mr Wise's dubious and varied activities with numerous other Shelley items, which do not need repetition here Wise's interest, however, in autograph manuscripts and signatures has been less noticed because of his vast output of privately printed chicaneries exposed by Carter and Pollard's brilliant investigation in 1934 and listed in Partington's Appendix in 1939

The familiar story, related by Mr Wise in his best dramatic manner, tells how a London dealer submitted some alleged original Shelley letters to him "I immediately saw that they were forgeries—so I tore them up, handed the fragments back—and said, 'Now then! You are at liberty to sue me for destroying your property'" In spite of this flamboyant denunciation of Shelley offerings, it would seem that Mr Wise had Shelley forgeries he reproduced as originals in facsimile and then defended as genuine, as in the case of the December 15-16 letter.

Consequently, the photo-facsimile half-tones in his *A Shelley Library* should be scrutinized with caution before any one of them is accepted as genuine The single scrap from what purports to be *Laon and Cythna*[3] is not in Shelley's autograph, and only a brief study of the handwriting on the two leaves reproduced from Wise's copy of Shelley's *Queen Mab*[4], with Shelley's annotations, will convince the reader that he is observing the work of two different hands—one autograph, at the bottom of the first page and at the top of the second, resembling Shelley's, the other, that of some one else, which seems to have been added later

As to Wise's access to Major Byron forgeries, we have only to recall that Schultess-Young came into possession of at least 19 forged letters of Major Byron and proceeded to issue them through the publisher, Richard Bentley, in *The Unpublished Letters of Lord Byron,* as late as 1872 Mr Partington has told this long story well, revealing how Wise, Forman, and Schultess-Young all lived near one another—a "curious" situation, as Richard Bentley commented after the fraud had been exposed and the spurious volume suppressed (Partington, *op. cit.,* Chapter 19) In spite of this disclosure these letters of Major Byron's concoction appeared again in 1930, under the imprint of a New York firm, elaborately issued as *Seventeen Letters of George*

[3] P 49, compare with facsimile reproduction of stanzas (Canto IX) 18, 19, 20, from manuscript in W M Rossetti, *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley,* Moxon, 1870, II, (frontispiece)

[4] Pp 38-39

Noel Gordon Byron to an Unknown Lady This is another instance of how Major Byron's manuscripts continue to be discovered as originals, denounced as spurious, and later rediscovered as originals—a process (not to mention modern forgeries) that bids fair to infest Byron and Shelley manuscript materials for all time, or until that day comes, as surely it must, when they are all unearthed, exposed, and ticketed in a finding and testing list for those uninitiated and unwary who begin to discover that something more is required than the boastful claims of a quick intuition, with no substantiating provenance or scientific analysis, to prevent their collections from being infiltrated with numerous spurious autographs

The end, therefore, of Mr Wise's "long, long trail a-winding" is not yet disclosed Though his curious and profitable ways with limited editions of printed pamphlets have been most thoroughly explored with the recent publication of Miss Fanny Ratchford's volume describing the relations of Forman, Wise, Wrenn, and Gosse, the surface has hardly been scratched as regards his large mass of over 300 manuscripts and unnumbered autograph letters most fortunately acquired by the British Museum Consider the impossible task for the bibliographical and handwriting experts had these manuscript materials been dispersed at auction by the four winds over the seven seas There is prospect now that when all of this material has been gone over and authenticated we shall know whether and how far Mr Wise's extensive knowledge of forgers' methods, of the chemical constituents of ink, etc proved useful in the handling of his manuscripts, as well as in the countless presentation inscriptions and letters contained in his books These must undergo examination, since he already stands charged with having forged emendations and corrections in proof sheets, or of having had them forged (Ratchford, *op. cit*, p 418) Then can be disclosed how many of his Byron and Shelley letters are genuine, and how many of Major Byron's fabrications remained in Wise's possession, and were accepted, or declared authentic

6 MORE PHASES OF THE SHELLEY LEGEND

The curious mixture of predatory idolatry exemplified by Silsbee and by *The Shelley Society* under the control of Wise gave birth in later years to further ramifications and aberrations in the Shelley Legend. One prominent phase was the amazing build-up in prices for all sorts of Shelley rarities and forgeries in the American and English book marts They kept pace with the general rise in rare books and autographs Another was the inevitable subjection of Shelley to analysis by Freudian enthusiasts—a direction in which Professor White very wisely refused to go Finally, there was the result of blowing up the Shelley Legend into a gigantic iridescent soap bubble An irreverent fellowship made up of the James Joyces and Aldous Huxleys of a

lost generation was sure sooner or later not only to prick the bubble, but to debunk Shelley himself With these phases of the legend we conclude, with some remarks in retrospect over the path we have trod

Shelley in the American Book Mart

The first great Shelley Library to be formed in America was the result of the intense devotion to Shelley of Mr C W Frederickson, a retired cotton broker of New York, who spent the last twenty years of his life in book collecting For completeness of Shelley first and later editions his library, at the date of his Shelley sale, 1897, was unrivalled The veteran book-dealer, the late Mr E D North, tells us in his informing Introductory Note to the Frederickson catalogue that the Shelley items numbered well over 2,000, comprising every known edition, rare pamphlets, and imprints and association copies, and several unique titles, like Shelley's presentation copy of *Queen Mab* to Mary, with manuscript notations by Mary This high spot, "amid merry laughter and pitying smiles," Mr Harry B Smith tells us, was knocked down to him for $615 He immediately drew interest on the investment when an old gentleman asked, "Would you allow me to hold that book for a moment?" Mr. Jerome Kern's copy of *Queen Mab,* which came up for auction at the height of the boom in 1928-29 when rare books became for a time a stock-market speculation, created a sensation by bringing $68,000, the highest price ever paid for a modern book This copy, one of the four known copies annotated, brought at the Forman sale in 1920 $6,000—and the more than tenfold increase, chiefly caused by keen rival bidders and their agents at a time when money was water, was only another signal instance of the persistent power of Shelley in the marts of the rare-book trade

The Frederickson catalogue listed also more than sixty of Shelley's autograph letters that sold for prices ranging from eleven to eighty dollars each "This entire collection of letters," Mr. Smith states, "sold for less than one letter would bring today I should have bought them all, but could afford only eleven of them, paying sixteen dollars for the letter in which Shelley and Mary Godwin planned their elopement." The entire section of Shelley and Shelleyana realized only $3,000

Anyone afflicted with a passion for Shelley rarities can only wish time could be rolled back so that he might participate in the Frederickson sale and rescue hundreds of items that sold cheap

Wise's statement on the Frederickson sale, however, should be noted.

> What a miserable disappointment the Frederickson sale is – so far at least as the much vaunted Shelley collection is concerned Hardly a decent first edition among the lot! The only really rare one is the 4to "Adonais" – and that is a bound copy! (Ratch-

ford, *Letters of Thomas J Wise to John Henry Wrenn*, Knopf, 1944, pp 133-134)

When we turn to autograph letters, we see an even more astonishing aspect of the Shelley Legend come true as an exhilarating diversion for millionaires Five of the letters in Harry B Smith's collection, which passed on in due course, have been offered in recent years by dealers "at greatly reduced prices" as follows

Frederickson to H B Smith, *1897*				*1943*
(1)	no 2334	$20	Shelley to Lackington (Jan 1, 1818)	$950
(2)	no 2369	25	Shelley to Claire (April 13, 1821)	950
(3)	no 2311	42 50	Shelley to Williams (March 5, 1813)	485
(4)	no 2374	35 00	Mary to Shelley (January 17, 1817)	985
(5)	no 2321	80 00	Shelley to Godwin (February 21, 1816)	765

Where such prices prevail for genuine Byron or Shelley letters, it is clear why forgery is a profitable traffic, and the warnings of De Ricci and A Edward Newton are in our experience fully justified

The Shelley Forgeries of 1926

The profitable business of forging Shelley manuscripts, which Hogg tells us was rife in 1858, has no doubt been fairly continuous ever since Two major waves, however, are discernible—the fabrications of Major Byron from 1845-1852, already disclosed, which still keep popping up as purported originals, and more recent forgeries, issued from 1916 to the year 1926 when a series of pretentious documents disturbed the London market.

The new forgeries had become so notorious that Edmund Gosse was led to comment with ironic amusement on the way wealthy Americans were being played for suckers, and Dr Rosenbach more than once passed his comments on those in England whom he had observed "quietly forging ahead" and manufacturing "original" half-titles for the American trade On August 8, 1925, Frederick M Hopkins, in the *Saturday Review of Literature* (New York), reported Gosse's observations on the forgeries of these years, as follows

> Sir Edmund Gosse recently remarked that "our ingenious transatlantic friends are being more and more generally swindled by London and Dublin dealers, who pass on to their simplicity clever forgeries of Shelley, Byron and Keats as important documents hitherto unknown" Mr. Gosse's characterization of the London and Dublin dealers as swindlers and American collectors as simpletons has caused more sharp comment in England than in America

In the same month, in the *Bookman's Journal* (XII, 203), a similar warning was issued against a dangerous "gentleman" forger who had been deriving for years a handsome income from his Shelley forgeries

> Be that as it may, warning is given here and now in 1925, that "Permission to inspect the papers after July 8, 1922, was, and still is, only to be obtained from the Curators at one of the regular meetings, under certain stringent conditions" There is one thing certain among others, one reflects upon reading this warning that the "gentleman" who for years has made a handsome income from his Shelley forgeries, and threatened various experts, booksellers, and auctioneers with palpitation of the heart to the point of syncope, should get no assistance from the Bodleian curators But you never know He must be such a dear, plausible, enthusiast in Letters And so irreproachable!

On the Saturday morning of July 24, 1926, readers of the *Morning Post* were startled by a correspondent's dispatch informing them that new forgeries "comparable to the more notorious achievements in the annals of literary deceptions had been in process of manufacture over a number (five, perhaps, ten or even fifteen years) ranging from manuscripts connected with a famous British General of the Eighteenth Century down to Kipling and Hudson—but with particular attention to Shelley

"The range of the Shelley forgeries of 1926 included not only Autograph Letters but Note-books, Manuscript Poems, books with Presentation Inscriptions or Annotations, and even Portraits, and the intimation was that an organized gang was engaged in manufacturing them in Paris

"When inquiries were made about the origin and recent ownership of these productions, answers of a specious ingenuity were forthcoming such as that the late owner was dead and on further inquiry about him that he lived in California The Paris gang further employed a London staff of subordinates whose business it was to secure as buyers glib salesmen who doubtless had other tales more plausible to account for their worthless paper

"Mr W. T Spencer, the well-known New Oxford Street dealer, showed the *Morning Post* representative two flagrant forgeries of Shelley's handwriting—a Preface, alleged to be written in Shelley's autograph, to Mary's *Frankenstein* and a letter to a friend, also a letter supposed to have been written by Mary to Mr. Robert Maddocks. Spencer explained that, although he knew they were forgeries, he bought them to take them out of circulation for the protection of his customers and the general trade. He paid £20 for them, he further declared, 'so that they would not get into the hands of one of the small dealers, than which nothing can be worse from the point of view of the high class dealer'

"Mr. Charles Sawyer, the Grafton Street expert, was also much interested in the Shelley documents He declared that the Mary Shelley letter was

genuine because it would cost more to forge than its worth of five shillings, and 'the old-fashioned stamp imprinted on it, indicating that it has passed through a machine, could not be satisfactorily reproduced.' As to the supposed Preface, it had been written on a sheet of paper torn from the old 'commonplace books' in which people used to jot down receipts, proverbs, and the like 'A close examination of the fold in the paper showed the tiny slits through which the binding of the book once passed, and it is unlikely that Shelley would have written such a Preface on a sheet of paper torn from a book' The handwriting expert who accompanied Mr. Sawyer said that the writing in some respects closely resembled Shelley's and was cleverly done, but that *the characteristic slope was decidedly wanting in many of the letters*"

On the 27th, the *Morning Post* on its picture page revealed the two photographs reproduced here, which plainly show the continued habit, which Mr. Waters has emphasized, of Shelley forgers to indulge in a more rounded script, an excess of long curved tails of "g's" and "y's", as well as their inability to achieve Shelley's slant, which they invariably make several degrees too much to the left Said the *Morning Post*

"Mr Myers, of Myers & Co, New Bond Street, revealed that he had been asked to buy a portion of the MS of Shelley's 'The Cenci'—the forgers at that time carrying on their operations from various towns in the South of France as well as from Florence and Milan for Myers produced an Italian newspaper clipping in which an Italian expert had passed favorably on the forged fragment of *The Cenci* therein illustrated Mr Myers also produced evidence that the parties responsible for the "discovery" of this MS actually adopted an air of injured innocence when doubts of its authenticity arose

"The widespread and audacious activities of these forgers is revealed by the following list of items—all of them ingeniously placed on the market at one time or another

"Two Shelley notebooks The defect in these lies in the fact that they are only partially filled, whereas all known Shelley notebooks are completely filled.

"Holograph letter from Shelley to S Turner respecting advances made to William Godwin

"Manuscript Dedication to 'The Cenci.'

"MS of Shelley's poem 'A Summer Evening.'

"Part of the original MS of the 'Address to the People of England on the death of Princess Charlotte,' and printed proofs of the same corrected in Shelley's handwriting

"Several small books bearing Shelley's autograph

"MS. of Shelley's verses 'To Music' (for C) [Item 727 of the 1848 Hodges sale was a 3-page 8vo manuscript of "An Ode for Music", sold to Montagu for £2 It was a G. Byron forgery]

"Original Manuscript of Chapter 4 of Anatole France's 'Le Mannequin d'Osier,' bearing 'Presented by M Anatole France to Miss R. Van Tine, 1897'

"MS of some 20 pages of a book by W H Hudson.

"MS of a short story by Rudyard Kipling

"Perhaps, however, the most daring forgery of all is that of the signature of General Wolfe on a copy of Gray's 'Elegy'

"The story of Wolfe's association with the 'Elegy' is that he recited the poem after the taking of Quebec, and that when dying he said, 'I would sooner have written that than have taken Quebec.'[1] The book bearing the forged signature is reported to have been bought by a very well-known American dealer for £1,000, and subsequently sold in the United States for a great deal more than that

"In all the documents tabulated above, there are certain characteristics apparently common to the caligraphy.

"The handwriting of some of these MSS appears to be somewhat similar to that employed in the W H Hudson MS, which in turn is similar to the caligraphy of the covering letter."

Edward Carpenter and George Barnefield On Shelley's Psychology

A good example of recent endeavors to explain the inner workings of Shelley and his "love-saturated" poetry may be found in the illuminating study of Edward Carpenter and George Barnefield (1925).

Edward Carpenter, being, as he himself has explained, one of the Intermediate Sex—a thesis he has expanded in a valuable book bearing that title—found in Shelley a complete example of combined masculine and feminine qualities—the general truth of which it would be hard to deny or to refute, and which is abundantly, though somewhat perilously, illustrated by Carpenter's analysis of Shelley's poems. His thesis is that, like all bisexual people, "Shelley automatically altered his polarity in accordance with his company, hence his cultivation of feminine women and masculine men," etc etc Carpenter has also some penetrating analyses of Shelley's hallucinations, or the strange occurrences in his life, which, like the shooting at Tremadoc, and other violent outbursts, will forever be ground for debate among the critics.

[1] The actual words are: "As they rowed along, the General, with much feeling, repeated nearly the whole of Gray's *Elegy* (which had appeared not long before and was as yet but little known) to an officer who sat with him in the stern of the boat, adding as he concluded that he 'would prefer being the author of that poem to the glory of beating the French tomorrow'" *Biographical Account of the Late John Robison* By John Playfair Edinburgh Constable, 1815

When Shelley wrote *sexless,* in a passage in "The Witch of Atlas", Carpenter wonders.

> if the poet were not suggesting a new type of being having the grace of both sexes and full of such dreams as would one day become the inspiration of a new world-order, yet of such a nature that its love would not be dependent (as, indeed, most loves now are) on mere sexual urge and corporeal desire, but would be a vivid manifestation of the universal creative life, in body even as in soul

This passage may appeal for its general truth to those who abandon their minds to redeeming the present by flowery visions of the future—and believe in the words of the old hymn· "It is better farther on"—as well as in the orthodox text of the Scriptures which tells us that "in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage", the only respect evidently in which Shelley would find joy in Heaven

Shelley's delight in bisexual forms, he says, is also evident—to which we may add so was his passion for sailing paper boats. It is the nature of the poetic imagination to delight in and to poetize about everything that attracts its attention

But when Carpenter descends to opining that Shelley's lavish "generosity forms a channel along which some of the repressed sexual impulses may obtain an indirect expression"—we observe that he has left literary criticism for the 1925 variety of tedious psychoanalytic jargon One is reminded of that masterly definition by a brother psychologist·

> Laughter is the synchronized coordination of neuropsychological reflexes with a semi-automatic impulse of mass-inherited subjectivism

More reprehensible, however, in Edward Carpenter's book, is Dr. George Barnefield, who is purportedly responsible for the heavy authoritative part of the work—Carpenter's share being only "an introductory essay"

This hoax brings the book, which otherwise need not have been introduced here, into *The Shelley Legend,* for Dr. George Barnefield and Edward Carpenter were one and the same—and Dr Barnefield is an invention (like Thomas J Wise's "Charles Alfred Seymour" (q v.)).

Why Shelley became the victim of so many quacks, charlatans and bores we may leave to the winnowing of time to explain

Aldous Huxley and the Shelley Legend

It is inevitable, after such a prolonged period of Shelley idolatry fostered by Lady Shelley, Garnett, Smith, Dowden, and The Shelley Society and cul-

minating in the effusions of Silsbee, that the reaction of disgust, which Tennyson predicted, should come in an age which took its literary tastes from D H Lawrence and James Joyce. It remained for Aldous Huxley through his character, Rampion, in *Point Counter Point,* to debunk the Shelley Legend

One wonders what Mary and Lady Shelley would have thought could they have lived to read the following diatribe in *Point Counter Point* (p. 119).

> Shelley? Don't talk to me of Shelley No, no There's something very dreadful about Shelley Not human, not a man. A mixture between a fairy and a white slug.
>
> Oh, exquisite and all that. But what a bloodless kind of slime inside! No blood, no real bones and bowels Only pulp and a white juice And oh, that dreadful lie in the soul! The way he was always pretending for the benefit of himself and everybody else that the world wasn't really the world, but either heaven or hell And that going to bed with women wasn't really going to bed with them, but just two angels holding hands Ugh! Think of his treatment of women—shocking, really shocking The women loved it, of course—for a little It made them feel so spiritual—that is, until it made them feel like committing suicide. *So* spiritual And all the time he was just a young schoolboy with a sensual itch like anybody else's, but persuading himself and other people that he was Dante and Beatrice rolled into one, only much more so Dreadful, dreadful! The only excuse is that, I suppose, he couldn't help it He wasn't born a man, he was only a kind of fairy slug with the sexual appetites of a schoolboy And then, think of that awful incapacity to call a spade a spade He always had to pretend it was an angel's harp or a platonic imagination. Do you remember the ode "To a Skylark"? "Hail to thee, blithe spirit! Bird thou never wert"! Just pretending, just lying to himself, as usual The lark couldn't be allowed to be a mere bird, with blood and feathers and a nest and an appetite for caterpillars Oh no! That wasn't nearly poetical enough, that was much too coarse It had to be a disembodied spirit Bloodless, boneless A kind of ethereal flying slug It was only to be expected Shelley was a kind of flying slug himself, and, after all, nobody can really write anything except himself If you're a slug, you must write about slugs, even though your subject is supposed to be a skylark. But I wish to God the bird had had as much sense as those sparrows in the book of *"Tobit"* and dropped a large mess in his eye. It would have served him damned well right for saying it wasn't a bird. Blithe spirit, indeed! Blithe spirit.[2]

[2] Reprinted by permission of Harper & Brothers

7 A WORD TO SHELLEY SCHOLARS

From what has been so far disclosed, Shelley scholars will observe that no definitive biography of Shelley can now be written, for vital Shelley source materials are still withheld from examination in the vaults of the Shelley heirs and elsewhere There are many Mary Shelley letters, the original manuscript journals of Shelley and Mary and Claire awaiting examination, the Major Byron forgeries as well as Shelley originals and undisclosed cognate material like William Godwin's diaries and other journals.

Be it especially noted, as we have already explained, that the manuscript journal of Shelley and Mary, the foundation stone of the whole structure of Shelley biography, has never been collated with Lady Shelley's compilation from it entitled *Shelley and Mary*. Professor White states that

> The manuscript of the journal disappeared while still in Lady Shelley's possession It has recently been located, and though not generally available, it was used by Miss R Glynn Grylls in her life of *Mary Shelley* It is impossible for me to say whether various gaps in the printed journal are due to Lady Shelley or to the original MS A limited examination kindly made for me by Miss Grylls suggests that though Lady Shelley handled the MS with considerable freedom and carelessness, the principal omissions occur also in the MS (I, p 680)

This statement, if correct, can only mean that Mary herself, or Lady Shelley, tore out and destroyed the entries for the crucial years; and no doubt had we been they, with similar family ties and social position and decorum to sustain, we might have done likewise—though from the scholars' point of view and that of the literary world such procedure seems reprehensible. For Shelley was not merely "My Shelley", as Mary Shelley insisted, but belonged to the ages, and there was no way that the Shelley heirs could permanently control by suppression the interpretation of him It must be remembered that Dowden when he had the precious journals in his hands for a little while observed to his horror that the manuscript readings "wherever I looked" were different from the printed text Lady Shelley issued in 1882 and upon which Mrs Marshall and he and subsequent biographers have had to depend

In Part III, because of the inaccessibility of many original and forged letters locked away from the ravages of war both in England and America, we have been compelled to limit our discussion of Major Byron to what was available and to draw our deductions therefrom

Mr. Ehrsam has illustrated in Part III Major Byron's favorite methods of composing Shelley letters from mosaics of sentences from genuine material – letters, essays, etc , his use of spurious Shelley materials – letters and essays by others, as well as sentences and passages of his own sentimental manu-

facture Until many more of his wares are accessible for examination, however, it will be impossible to determine whether he engaged extensively in making numerous forged copies of genuine originals of Byron, Mary Shelley and Shelley letters and manuscripts, or how far the Shelley forgeries are his own textual composition, or are derived from family materials stolen, borrowed, dictated, or otherwise made to order

Professor White may be quite right in his assumption without proof that back of the crucial December 16 and January 11 and other Harriet letters there lie genuine originals, but in view of the fact that all known copies are suspected and in view of the Major's extensive activities as a blackmailer and extortioner, the Harriet letters may be his own clever compositions, which the Mary Shelley family bought and found "apt and of great credit" At any rate that they trafficked in them extensively, both privately and at auction, has been demonstrated beyond question That they retained them, and saw to it that they entered Shelley biography as genuine, and then distributed them with genuine materials, without proper notation, has also been proved beyond reasonable doubt by the mass of evidence gathered in this book When further research of this kind has been carried on, we shall know much more than we now do of Major Byron and his relations with the Byron and Shelley heirs With Mary, evidently, he began as a pest and ended as a habit.

It has also become obvious that had Garnett, Dowden, Rossetti, and Symonds been aware of what had gone on behind the scenes from 1845 to 1852 and, subsequently, of Lady Shelley's methods of composing her *Shelley and Mary,* or had later scholars like Forman, or De Ricci (who suspected), carried their researches into bibliography and handwriting much farther – or had Professors Peck and White with modern scientific equipment, now at command, really got down to the grass roots in their researches – Shelley and Mary biography would be very different today.

Only when all these vital primary sources, such as those cited above from collections now withheld, are made accessible can Shelley biography become truly written—when all the forgeries are exposed and sifted out from the welter of the badly edited Shelley letters in Roger Ingpen's Julian Edition A truly satisfactory edition of the correspondence will not be obtained until every letter has been collated with the manuscript original, and the authenticity of the original proved

We would suggest finally to Shelley scholars who come after us that they pursue much farther than we have been able to do the chirography and bibliography of the source materials of Shelley and his circle We have merely spaded up a few rows in a particularly rich vineyard, and because of lack of access to originals our findings, in some cases, are merely tentative and suggestive, and will not be final until such investigations are made

We hope, too, that the source materials still withheld by Shelley's descendants and other collectors will henceforth be freely open to such investigators, in the full faith, which Lady Shelley did not have, that nothing that can be revealed will ever dim the glory of Shelley the poet, that his place in English letters is secure, and that nothing he did in the brief span of his feverish thirty years can permanently detract from it or from his prophetic idealism and his generous and noble aspirations for mankind.

We have deliberately resisted the temptation, to which so many Shelley critics yield, to utilize the poetry and fiction of the Shelley circle to reinforce biographical interpretations It would have been an easy matter to cull out passages to reinforce this view or that view, from *Queen Mab, Julian and Maddalo* or *Epipsychidion,* or from Mary Shelley's and Peacock's biographical novels This sort of interpretation, however, is so fraught with subjectivism that no critic can be found in agreement with any other, moreover, with the artist we can never be sure where reality ends and imagination begins Particularly is this true of Shelley, who was not only a myth-maker but the cause of myth-making in others Professor White is on sure ground when he insists that in such works as *Epipsychidion* and *Prometheus Unbound* "every man is his own allegorist,"—and, we may add, his own Shelley biographer It is disconcerting, therefore, to find White subjecting *Julian and Maddalo* to such treatment in a tortuous effort to sustain his notions about Mary, Clara, and Elena Adelaide in the Hoppner affair.

8. CONCLUSION

In bringing this long trail of deviousness in the posterity of Shelley to a conclusion, we wish to reiterate that we have written this account not to detract from the greatness of Shelley as man or poet but to expose what the Shelley cult of unwise relatives, worshippers, friends, biographers, and critics have wrought in one hundred and twenty-three years since the poet's death by special and specious pleadings, by suppression, distortion, or destruction of evidence, and by the many other reprehensible devices involving chicanery and forgery revealed in this study.

"Truth crushed to earth shall rise again" Better would it have been, in our opinion, if Mary and especially Lady Shelley, and her zealous cohorts, had never attempted to invest the "pardlike spirit beautiful and swift" with the sanctified robes of Victorian piety and sentimentalism And yet we venture the opinion that at least fifty per cent of the present attitude toward Shelley still stems from this cult of worshippers, and hangs over to becloud and bedevil the interpretation of Professor Newman Ivey White. This latest two-volume monument of Shelley scholarship, to which we, as well as all scholars are indebted, is unfortunately marred by the same sort of special

pleading in which Dowden indulged and against what seemed, to Matthew Arnold in his time and to us in ours, the plain facts of the matter

Better in all ways for us, as well as for Shelley, could we "see Shelley plain", and we cannot conceive that if, as Lady Shelley believed, he is an ever-present spirit, he can approve of what has been done in his name For in the last year of his life he wrote, "Let us see the truth, whatever that may be"

Both Peck and White, it is true, have done service in scotching in part the vilification of Harriet, and we trust that, in the light of what we have revealed, "the chatter about Harriet" will cease

Professor White, however, is not to be commended for following the primrose path of Dowden and indulging in the same mistaken efforts of special pleading to relieve Shelley from the embarrassments of the Hoppner affair, or for his other efforts throughout his biography to play down the significance of Shelley's devotion to other women, and to play up his fidelity to Mary, which is still a part of the Shelley Legend

After his experience with Emilia Viviani revealed that she was not a divinity but, like that other wily Italian, Count Guiccioli, had an itching palm for gold, Shelley began to realize that to seek and grasp one's ideal of love and beauty in material form was the sure way to lose it. But that did not deter him in the final transfer of his love to Jane Williams, who made much capital in later years over her relations with Shelley, much to Mary's discomfiture and alienation For the beautiful Jane Williams, having left her husband, was not only the last love of Shelley but was the wife, by courtesy only, of Ellerker Williams and, later, of Thomas Jefferson Hogg—and in the last two relations, if not in the first, received the commendation and sanction of Mary We cannot imagine her, as Professor White does, as one who would sternly repel Shelley's kiss!

Nowhere is candor more needed than in Shelley biography, for we are confident that no facts in Shelley's life that have been or may be unearthed —no matter how interpreted—can dim the love of his generous if prodigal spirit, or the lustre of the poetry that came forth from England's "child of light".

Is it again to be a "sore trial" for Shelley devotees, as were the Dowden revelations to Matthew Arnold, to face the plain truth about Shelley and Claire, and Shelley and Mary and Hogg? Are critics to wonder any longer why Bob Southey and the British public were so adamant and persistent in their attitudes? What was the British public to think of Byron, Shelley, Claire, and Mary at Geneva, or of Shelley, Mary, Claire and baby at Marlow, and later in Italy? They thought what people always think about those who defy the mores and fly in the face of the conventions

Shelley himself was led to wonder at the public vilification of him and to "wail for the world's wrong," because, as Santayana explains so beautifully, he was incapable of becoming a citizen of the world

> Shelley seems hardly to have been brought up; he grew up in the nursery among his young sisters, at school among the rude boys, without any affectionate guidance, without imbibing any religious or social tradition If he received any formal training or correction, he instantly rejected it inwardly, set it down as unjust and absurd, and turned instead to sailing paper boats, to reading romances or to writing them, or to watching with delight the magic of chemical experiments Thus the mind of Shelley was thoroughly disinherited, but not, like the minds of most revolutionists, by accident and through the niggardliness of fortune, for few revolutionists would be such if they were heirs to a baronetcy Shelley's mind disinherited itself out of allegiance to itself, because it was too sensitive and too highly endowed for the world into which it had descended It rejected ordinary education, because it was incapable of assimilating it Education is suitable to those few animals whose faculties are not completely innate, animals that, like most men, may be perfected by experience because they are born with various imperfect alternative instincts rooted equally in their system But most animals, and a few men, are not of this sort They cannot be educated, because they are born complete Full of predeterminate intuitions, they are without intelligence, which is the power of seeing things as they are Endowed with a specific, unshakable faith, they are impervious to experience and as they burst the womb they bring ready-made with them their final and only possible system of philosophy
>
> Love of the ideal, passionate apprehension of what ought to be, has for its necessary counterpart condemnation of the actual, wherever the actual does not conform to that ideal The spontaneous soul, the soul of the child, is naturally revolutionary, and when the revolution fails, the soul of the youth becomes naturally pessimistic All moral life and moral judgment have this deeply romantic character, they venture to assert a private ideal in the face of an intractable and omnipotent world Some moralists begin by feeling the attraction of untasted and ideal perfection These, like Plato, excel in elevation, and they are apt to despise rather than to reform the world Other moralists begin by a revolt against the actual, at some point where they find the actual particularly galling These excel in sincerity, their pur-blind conscience is urgent, and they are reformers in intent and sometimes even in action But the ideals they frame are fragmentary and shallow, often mere provisional vague watchwords, like liberty, equality, and fraternity, they

possess no positive visions or plans for moral life as a whole, like Plato's Republic

Shelley was one of these spokesmen of the *a priori*, one of these nurslings of the womb, like a bee or a butterfly, a dogmatic, inspired, perfect, and incorrigible creature He was innocent and cruel, swift and wayward, illuminated and blind Being a finished child of nature, not a joint product, like most of us, of nature, history, and society, he abounded miraculously in his own clear sense, but was obtuse to the droll, miscellaneous lessons of fortune The cannonade of hard, inexplicable facts that knocks into most of us what little wisdom we have left Shelley dazed and sore, perhaps, but uninstructed When the storm was over, he began chirping again his own natural note If the world continued to confine and beset him, he hated the world, and gasped for freedom Being incapable of understanding reality, he revelled in creating world after world in idea For his nature was not merely predetermined and obdurate, it was also sensitive, vehement, and fertile With the soul of a bird, he had the senses of a man-child, the instinct of the butterfly was united in him with the instinct of the brooding fowl and of the pelican This winged spirit had a heart It darted swiftly on its appointed course, neither expecting nor understanding opposition, but when it met opposition it did not merely flutter and collapse, it was inwardly outraged, it protested proudly against fate, it cried aloud for liberty and justice

The consequence was that Shelley, having a nature preformed but at the same time tender, passionate, and moral, was exposed to early and continual suffering When the world violated the ideal which lay so clear before his eyes, that violation filled him with horror If to the irrepressible gushing of life from within we add the suffering and horror that continually checked it, we shall have in hand, I think, the chief elements of his genius (*Little Essays*, pp 203-205)

It is not for wordly wisdom, then, God forbid, that we read Shelley's poetry. If we want that, we turn to the *Don Juan* of his friend, Lord Byron

Any just and rounded estimate of Shelley, therefore, must embrace both the statement of Arnold and the statement of Byron who knew him; for they present the paradox that is Shelley.

Arnold· "An entirely human inflammability, joined to an inhuman want of humour and a superhuman power of self-deception."

Byron. "He was the most gentle, the most admirable and least worldly-minded person I ever met, full of delicacy, disinterested beyond all other men, and possessing a degree of genius joined to simplicity as rare as it is admirable He had formed to himself a beau ideal of all that is fine, high-

minded, and noble, and he acted up to this ideal even to the very letter He had a most brilliant imagination, but a total want of worldly wisdom"

Finally, of all Shelley critics, it is Andrew Lang—no Shelley worshipper—who in our opinion has said, and therefore should say, the last word about Shelley's gift to the world of poetry

> For Humanity, of which you hoped such great things, Science predicts extinction in a night of Frost The sun will grow cold, slowly – as slowly as doom came on Jupiter in your "Prometheus" but as surely If this nightmare be fulfilled, perhaps the Last Man, in some fetid hut on the ice-bound Equator, will read, by a fading lamp charged with the dregs of the oil in his cruse, the poetry of Shelley So reading, he, the latest of his race, will not wholly be deprived of those sights which alone (says the nameless Greek) make life worth enduring In your verse he will have sight of sky, and sea, and cloud, the gold of dawn and the gloom of earthquake and eclipse He will be face to face, in fancy, with the great powers that are dead, sun, and ocean, and the illimitable azure of the heavens In Shelley's poetry, while Man endures, all those will survive, for your "voice is as the voice of winds and tides," and perhaps more deathless than all of these, and only perishable with the perishing of the human spirit. (*Letters to Dead Authors*)

APPENDIX

The following is a representative but perhaps incomplete list of the numerous privately printed Shelley publications of this period It is, however, a fuller listing than may be found anywhere else, with many notes on bindings and other details

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to examine every one of these titles, nor yet to list all the published varieties of each one But enough information has been gathered from many sources to reveal the general practice followed by the issuers of these limited reprints

A special note is necessary. in the publications from 1886 and thereafter, the varieties on vellum did not carry the imprint of the Shelley Society, even though the other varieties might have To save space, the compiler has not given separately the title-page of the vellum copies

CHECK LIST OF SHELLEY PUBLICATIONS FOR PRIVATE DISTRIBUTION BY FORMAN, WISE, AND OTHERS (1870-1920)

(ARRANGED CHRONOLOGICALLY WITHIN EACH YEAR, ALPHABETIZED BY TITLE)

circa 1870

Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson

(A facsimile reprint of the first edition, prepared by Richard Herne Shepherd, issued about 1870 See Wise *A Shelley Library,* page 32)

Edition on plain, heavy paper

"Some years ago a so-called fac-simile of the *Posthumous Fragments* was issued without any intentional indication that it was not the original but for the benefit of the unwary it may be set down that the paper of the reprint is thicker and stiffer than that of the original" H Buxton Forman, *The Shelley Library,* page 13

1870

Shelley's Declaration of Rights (London Printed for private circulation, 1870) (no title-page) 19 pages

15 copies (small quarto, blue paper wrappers)

1876

Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude, &c By Percy Bysshe Shelley Edited with notes, by H Buxton Forman, and printed for private distribution (in London), 1876 (May) 62 pages

5 copies on vellum
25 copies on Whatman's hand-made paper (grey-blue boards)
50 copies on plain paper

"This private issue of Shelley's *Alastor &c* is restricted to 50 copies on plain paper, 25 copies on Whatman's hand-made paper and 5 copies on vellum

[Signed] W Bowden
Printer, 23, Red Lion Street
19 May, 1876"

The Choice A Poem on Shelley's death, by Mary W Shelley
Edited by H Buxton Forman London Printed for private distribution, 1876 14 pages
3 copies on vellum

The Daemon of the World By Percy Bysshe Shelley The First Part as Published in 1816 with Alastor The Second Part Deciphered and Now First Printed From His Own Manuscript Revision and Interpolations in the Newly Discovered Copy of Queen Mab London Privately printed by H Buxton Forman, 1876 xiv 38 pages

2 copies on yellow Dutch hand-made paper
50 copies on fine hand-made white "wove" paper
"A retrenchmen of *Queen Mab*"

Epipsychidion Verses Addressed to the Noble and Unfortunate Lady Emilia V———— Edited, with notes, by H Buxton Forman, and printed for private distribution London 1876 26 pages or 33 pages
There are two varieties No 64 includes studies and cancelled passages as grouped in the Library Edition, pages 27 to 33 of the reprint, No 65 lacks these pages See Forman, *The Shelley Library*, pages 101-102

No 64
1 copy on vellum
25 copies on Whatman's hand-made paper
50 copies on plain paper

No 65
5 copies on vellum (blue-grey boards)
5 copies on Whatman's hand-made paper
10 copies on plain paper

Oedipus Tyrannus; or, Swellfoot the Tyrant A Tragedy, in Two Acts Edited by H Buxton Forman (London Printed for private distribution, 1876)
"There is a private octavo reprint of Oedipus Tyrannus of which, owing to a mistake that need not be explained there are two varieties, neither of them having a dated special title-page, but both executed in 1876 Both consist of fly-title *Oedipus Tyrannus, or, Swellfoot the Tyrant,* with bibliographical note at back, title-page, Advertisement, and Dramatis Personnae as in the original, and pages 7 to 45 of text, but while No 61 has a note back-

ing page 45, in No 62 the same note is a fresh leaf facing pages 47 and 48, in No 61 there are footnotes to the Advertisement and Dramatis Personae not given in No 62, and at page 45, over the imprint of Seyfang, No 61 has, and No 62 has not, the words 'The Imprint of *Oedipus Tyrannus* is as follows –'" H Buxton Forman, *The Shelley Library, page* 100

No 61 1 copy on vellum (bound in crimped calf)
25 copies on Whatman's hand-made paper
50 copies on plain paper

No 62 5 copies on vellum (blue-grey boards)
5 copies on Whatman's hand-made paper
10 copies on plain paper

Rosalind & Helen Edited, with notes, by H Buxton Forman, and printed for private distribution (London), 1876

1 copy on vellum
25 copies on Whatman's hand-made paper
50 copies on plain paper

1877

Adonais An Elegy on the Death of John Keats Edited, with notes, by H Buxton Forman (London) Printed for private distribution, 1877

6 copies on vellum (with etching)
25 copies on Whatman's hand-made paper (with etching)
50 copies on plain paper

Hellas A Lyrical Drama by Percy Bysshe Shelley Edited and Annotated by H Buxton Forman (London) Printed for private distribution, 1877

66 pages
5 copies on vellum
25 copies on Whatman's hand-made paper (grey paper boards)
50 copies on plain paper

Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson, &c Edited by H Buxton Forman, and printed for private distribution (London) 1877

5 copies on vellum
25 copies on Whatman's hand-made paper
50 copies on plain paper

1879

Notes on Sculptures in Rome and Florence, Together With a Lucianic Fragment and Criticism of Peacock's Poem "Rhododaphne" By Percy Bysshe

Shelley Edited by Harry Buxton Forman London Printed for private distribution, 1879 (Printed by Ballantyne and Hanson, London & Edinburgh) 61 pages (Issue noted in every copy)

25 copies on Whatman's hand-made paper (numbered in ink)
50 copies on plain paper (numbered in ink, blue cloth boards)

1880

The Pedigree of Percy Bysshe Shelley Now First Given From the Records of the College of Arms London Printed for Private Distribution, 1880 (Arms & Frontispiece by W B Scott)

50 copies printed for America
50 copies printed for England

The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley Edited by H Buxton Forman London Privately printed, 1880

25 copies on Whatman's hand-made paper

Shelley's Poems and Letters, Selected With a Preface by Richard Garnett London, 1880

50 copies on large paper

1882

Select Letters of Shelley Edited by Richard Garnett London, 1882

50 copies on large paper

1883

Shelley on Blasphemy Being His Letter to Lord Ellenborough, Occasioned by the Sentence Which He Passed on Mr D I Eaton as Publisher of the Third Part of Paine's "Age of Reason" London, 1883

1 sheet

(Pamphlet with the Text as in Mr Forman's Edition)

We Pity the Plumage But Forget the Dying Bird By the Hermit of Marlow Edinburgh Privately printed for the Aungervyle Society, 1883

(grey paper wrappers)

1884

Shelley, A Poem With Other Writings Relating to Shelley, By the Late James Thomson ("B V"), To Which is Added An Essay on the Poems of William Blake, by the Same Author London Chiswick Press, Printed for Private Circulation, 1884 (Edited by Bertram Dobell)

"Each Copy is numbered and signed by the editor" The Copy at Yale University Library is numbered "32" and is initialed "B D" in ink

30 copies on Whatman's hand-made paper
160 copies on toned paper

1885

Alastor, or, The Spirit of Solitude And Other Poems By Percy Bysshe Shelley A Facsimile Reprint of the Original Edition, First Published in 1816 London Reeves and Turner and B Dobell, 1885 (With a Prefatory Note by Bertram Dobell) (Reprinted at the Chiswick Press by C Whittingham & Co) viii, 101 pages

"This reprint . is restricted to 404 copies, viz –"

4 copies on vellum
50 copies on Whatman's hand-made paper
350 copies on "toned paper"

Two hundred copies on "toned paper" (dated 1886 on the cover, but retaining the original title-page of 1885) were taken by the Shelley Society, which reprinted page 34 to correct an error in the first edition (line 12 of this page, "with" should have read "within") These 200 were issued in the green paper boards of the Shelley Society The remaining 150 were bound in tan boards, and the spine label included the words "Facsimile Reprint"

"The excessive scarcity, and consequently the ever-increasing cost to the collector of first editions of Shelley's writings, has suggested to me the idea of reprinting these editions exactly in their original form." Prefatory Note, page (iii).

1886

Adonais, An Elegy on the Death of John Keats, by Percy Bysshe Shelley First Printed at Pisa with the Types of Didot in 1821 and Now Reprinted in Exact Fac-simile Edited with a Bibliographical Introduction by Thomas J Wise London Published for the Shelley Society by Reeves and Turner, 1886 (Printed by Richard Clay & Sons, April) 22 pages plus facsimile

Shelley Society's Publications Second Series, Number 1.

3 copies on vellum (crown quarto)
300 copies on hand-made paper (watermarked John Dickinson & Co) (green paper boards, includes blue paper wrappers of original in facsimile) 10 shillings

Adonais; An Elegy on the Death of John Keats, By Percy Bysshe Shelley First Printed at Pisa With the Types of Didot in 1821 and Now Reprinted in Exact Facsimile Edited With a Bibliographical Introduction by Thomas J Wise London Published for the Shelley Society by Reeves and Turner, 1886 Revised Edition (This should correctly be styled the Second Edition)

Shelley Society's Publications Second Series, Number 1.

250 copies on plain paper (includes blue paper wrappers of original in facsimile, green paper boards)

Alastor (see 1885 entry) London, Reeves & Turner and B Dobell, 1886 viii, 101 pages

Shelley Society's Publications Second Series, Number 3

200 copies on "toned paper" (green paper boards, about ¼ inch taller than regular Shelley Society publication)

Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude and Other Poems By Percy Bysshe Shelley A Facsimile Reprint of the Original Edition First Published in 1816 Edited by Bertram Dobell London Published for the Shelley Society by Reeves and Turner, 1886 (Printed by Richard Clay & Sons, May) xlvi, 101 pages

Shelley Society's Publications Second Series, Number 3

3 copies on vellum (large quarto)

15 copies on large Van Gelder hand-made paper (salmon-pink paper boards)

300 copies on Van Gelder paper (green paper boards) 6 shillings (about ¼ inch shorter than entry immediately above)

The Cenci Edited by H Buxton Forman London Printed for private use, 1886 (March) ii, 89 pages (For the use of Actors)

20 copies (Frederickson Sale catalogue, page 151, no 1611)

30 copies, of which 10 only were left uncut (Forman)

40 copies (Wise *A Shelley Library,* page 53, grey paper wrappers)

The Cenci A Tragedy in Five Acts by Percy Bysshe Shelley Given From the Poet's Own Editions With an Introduction by Alfred Forman and H Buxton Forman, and a Prologue by John Todhunter London Published for the Shelley Society by Reeves and Turner, 1886 (With a Frontispiece Portrait of Beatrice Cenci, etched by W B Scott) (iii) – xv, 107 pages

Shelley Society's Publications Fourth Series, Miscellaneous Number 3

Edition on plain paper (green paper boards) (no issued not indicated)

Edition on plain paper (paper wrappers) 2 shillings, 6 pence

xv, 107 pages

100 copies (green paper wrappers) printed at the cost of Mr Henry Arthur Jones for presentation to the principal guests at the performance of *The Cenci* at the Grand Theatre, Islington, on May 7, 1886

Hellas, A Lyrical Drama by Percy Bysshe Shelley Reprinted from the Original Edition of 1822 Edited by Thomas J Wise London Published for the Shelley Society (For the First Performance of the Drama) by Reeves and Turner, 1886 (Printed by Richard Clay & Sons, July 1) xi, 60 pages

Shelley Society's Publications Second Series, Number 5

3 copies on vellum (crown quarto, frontispiece of Shelley's grave; grey paper wrappers, re-bound in grey boards)

15 copies on large Whatman's hand-made paper (pink paper boards)

100 copies on large fine (plain) paper (portrait by Clint, grey paper boards) 3 shillings

500 copies on Van Gelder paper (no frontispiece, grey paper wrappers)

500 copies on plain paper (no frontispiece, grey paper wrappers) 2 s

Hellas, A Lyrical Drama by Percy Bysshe Shelley A Reprint of the Original Edition Published in 1822 With the Author's Prologue and Notes by Various Hands Edited by Thomas J Wise Second Edition London Published for the Shelley Society by Reeves and Turner, 1886 (Printed by Richard Clay & Sons, August) lviii, 60 pages

Shelley Society's Publications Second Series, Number 5

3 copies on vellum (pink paper wrappers, re-bound in grey boards)

15 copies on large Van Gelder paper (pink paper boards, includes brown paper covers of original in facsimile)

250 copies on Van Gelder paper (green paper boards, includes brown paper covers of original in facsimile) 8 shillings

an edition on plain paper

Hellas, A Lyrical Drama by Percy Bysshe Shelley The Choruses Set to Music by William Christian Sellé London Published for the Shelley Society by Reeves and Turner, 1886 (Printed by Spottiswoode & Co) 98 pages

Shelley Society's Publications Extra Series, Number 1 (Later transferred to Fourth Series, and issued free to members of the Society among the publications of 1887)

20 copies on plain paper (grey paper wrappers) 4 shillings

an edition on plain paper (grey paper boards) 4 shillings

an edition on plain paper (grey paper wrappers) 4 shillings (no number specified)

The Inaugural Address to the Shelley Society By the Rev Stopford A Brooke London Twenty-five copies privately printed, 1886

3 copies on vellum

25 copies on hand-made paper

Lines on the Inaugural Meeting of the Shelley Society Reprinted for Private Distribution From the Saturday Review of March 13th, 1886 London Printed for private distribution only, 1886 (Printed by Richard Clay & Sons, April 1) 25 pages

(Written by Andrew Lang)

4 copies on vellum (grey boards)

26 copies on hand-made paper

A Memoir of Shelley (With a Fresh Preface) by William Michael Rossetti

London. Printed for the Shelley Society by Richard Clay & Sons, 1886 (Not for sale) 154 pages

Shelley Society's Publications Fourth Series, Miscellaneous Number 2

250 copies on plain paper (green paper boards)

Second Edition (With a Table of Contents and an Index) viii, 162 pages

250 copies on plain paper (green paper boards)

A Memoir of Percy Bysshe Shelley (With New Preface) By William Michael Rossetti London John Slark, 1886 162 pages

"Uncut in the original green paper boards, uniform with the two earlier editions, but with the words *Second* [*sic*] *Edition* added upon the side, above the imprint

"This is the Third Edition of the Shelley Society's issue of Rossetti's *Memoir* It is composed of Sheets prepared for the regular published edition, including the title-page with the imprint of John Slark A number of copies were taken by the Shelley Society, the remainder were put up in olive-green cloth boards, and published by Slark in the ordinary manner This procedure was rendered necessary by the unexpected increase of the Society's membership, which caused the copies of the two editions originally prepared for the Shelley Society to be insufficient to meet the demand" Wise *A Shelley Library*, page 130

London John Slark, 1886 162 pages

First published edition, in olive green cloth boards, with gold lettering across spine

The Necessity of Atheism, by Percy Bysshe Shelley A Reprint of the Original Edition Produced in 1811 Edited by Thomas J Wise London Published for the Shelley Society by Reeves and Turner, 1886 (November)

Shelley Society's Publications Second Series, Number 8

300 copies on plain paper (according to John P Anderson's bibliography, page ix, where the British Museum copy is recorded)

But note "It had been intended that the reprint should form no 8 of the Second Series of the Shelley Society's publications But, for sufficient reasons, the book was never completed and issued Before the types were distributed, I caused the present copy to be printed, that I might preserve it for my own use upon a subsequent occasion" Wise *A Shelley Library*, page 34

Notes on the First Performance of Shelley's *The Cenci* Extracts from Reviews, With a Preface by Sydney E Preston London Printed for Private Circulation, 1886

35 copies on hand-made Van Gelder paper (pink paper boards)

35 copies on hand-made paper (pink wrappers)

Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson

Had been intended for the Second Series, Number 9, of the Shelley Society's Publications, with an introduction by Thomas J Wise The project was discontinued 1 copy only, as described by Wise *A Shelley Library*, page 31

Prologue to Hellas by Percy Bysshe Shelley With an Introductory Note by Richard Garnett Edited and Annotated by Thomas J Wise London For Private Distribution Only, 1886 (Printed by Richard Clay & Sons) 28 pages

20 copies on Whatman's hand-made paper (with portrait by Clint, pink paper wrappers)

Prologue to Hellas by Percy Bysshe Shelley With an Introductory Note by Richard Garnett Edited and Annotated by Thomas J Wise London For Private Distribution Only, 1886 (Printed by Richard Clay & Sons, June 1) 36 pages (Second Edition)

3 copies on vellum (no portrait, pink paper wrappers, re-bound in grey boards)

7 copies on Dutch hand-made paper (pink paper boards)

10 copies on Whatman's hand-made paper (pink paper boards)

Review of Hogg's "Memoirs of Prince Alexy Haimatoff" by Percy Bysshe Shelley Together With an Extract from "Some Early Writings of Shelley" by Professor E Dowden Edited With an Introductory Note by Thomas J Wise London Published for the Shelley Society by Reeves and Turner, 1886 (Printed by Richard Clay & Sons, March 1st) 54 pages

Shelley Society's Publications Second Series, Number 2

3 copies on vellum (green paper wrappers, re-bound in grey boards)

300 copies on Van Gelder hand-made paper (green paper boards) priced at half-a-crown (2½ shillings)

2d Edition (With an additional "Note" by Thomas J Wise appended to the Introduction, page 12) 1886 (Title-page reads "Revised Edition") 54 pages

250 copies on Van Gelder hand-made paper (green paper boards)

The Shelley Library An Essay in Bibliography by H Buxton Forman Shelley's Own Books, Pamphlets and Broadsides, Posthumous Separate Issues, and Posthumous Books Wholly or Mainly By Him London. Published for the Shelley Society by Reeves and Turner, 1886 127 pages

Shelley Society's Publications Fourth Series, Miscellaneous Number 1

edition on plain paper (grey paper wrappers) 3 shillings, 6 pence

edition on plain paper (green paper boards) no price listed, no number specified

Shelley's Beatrice Cenci and Her First Interpreter London Printed for Private Circulation, 1886

3 copies on vellum
edition on plain paper

Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* A Study of Its Meaning and Personages By William M Rossetti London Printed for Private Distribution, 1886 (Printed by Richard Clay & Sons, October) 29 pages

3 copies on vellum (pink paper wrappers)
25 copies on hand-made Van Gelder paper (pink paper boards)
25 copies on hand-made Van Gelder paper (pink paper wrappers)

Shelley's View of Nature Contrasted With Darwin's By Mathilde Blind London Printed for Private Distribution, 1886 (Printed by Richard Clay & Sons, December 18th) 22 pages

3 copies on vellum (green paper wrappers, re-bound in grey boards)
25 copies on hand-made Van Gelder paper (green paper boards)

Sonnets By Alfred Forman London Printed for Private Circulation Only, 1886

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The Mask of Anarchy Written on the Occasion of the Massacre at Manchester By Percy Bysshe Shelley Fac-simile of the Holograph Manuscript, With An Introduction by H Buxton Forman London Published for the Shelley Society by Reeves and Turner, 1887 (Printed by W Griggs, London, and Richard Clay & Sons)

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1890

An Address to the Irish People By Percy Bysshe Shelley Reprinted From the Original Edition of 1812 Edited by Thomas J Wise With An Introduction by T W Rolleston London Published for the Shelley Society by Reeves and Turner, 1890 (Printed by Richard Clay & Sons, October 4th) 29 pages plus facsimile (Presented to the Society by Walter B Slater)
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A Refutation of Deism By Percy Bysshe Shelley With An Introduction by G W Foote London 1890

1891

Alma Murray. Portrait as Beatrice Cenci With Critical Notice Containing Four Letters from Robert Browning London Elkin Mathews, 1891 (Printed by Richard Clay & Sons) With a Portrait Frontispiece
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The Shelley Society's Publications The Shelley Society's Papers Part II Being the Second Part of the First Volume London Published for the Shelley Society by Reeves and Turner, 1891 (Has no title-page, begins at page 177, and ends at page 396)

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The Shelley Centenary at Horsham, August 4, 1892 Address on Shelley by Mr Edmund Gosse Speeches by Professor J Nichol, and Mr Frederic Harrison Press and Personal Notices Reprinted With Additions, from the West Sussex Gazette Compiled and Edited by the Honorary Secretaries (of the Shelley Society), J Stanley Little and J J Robinson Arundel West Sussex Gazette Office, 1892

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1893

Hand-List of Manuscripts, Letters, Printed Books and Personal Relics of Percy Bysshe Shelley and His Circle Exhibited in the Guildhall Library, London (By Permission of the Library Committee), July 11-29, 1893 London Blades, East and Blades, 1893
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1919

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